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STOCKSY

Thoughts



"If we had no winter, the spring would not be so pleasant; if we did not sometimes taste of adversity, prosperity would not be so welcome."

-ANNE BRADSTREET, "Meditations Divine and Moral"

Editor's Note

A Game of Would You Rather, No Onions Required



OULD YOU rather eat the same food for the rest of your life or listen to the same song? This was the topic of a favorite conversation game playing out in my backseat by a group of teenagers, two of whom were mine.

My daughter Olivia, missing zero beats: "Music is the answer for everything. I'd eat onions for the rest of my life for music."

Wanna do 15 years old again? Didn't think so. The trudge up the mountain of 10th grade is difficult enough. Imagine navigating love, friends, hair, and physics with the gale-force winds of 2020 blowing at you. What a parenting experience, watching adolescence from such an intimate vantage point. I ache to help, to carry half their burdens, my own back be damned. Yet I know the best thing I can do as life gets heavier year by year is just trot alongside them, shouting suggestions into the wind.

Of course, today's teens have a much better-stocked emotional toolbox than we ever did, though they may fumble around inside it. Olivia once said, "No matter what you're feeling, music can make it better." (I ran to my office and wrote that down in my "from the mouths of babes" book.) I think we all remember the songs that channeled our every coming-of-age demon, dream, and desire. Olivia also writes in a journal, bought a crystal, meditates. I'm fascinated inspired, really—by her efforts to lighten the heaviness of life.

Her more practical mother gets her emotional exhales from walking out of a just-spot-cleaned kitchen, sitting after a morning walk, petting Milo. I think 2021 may call for the big guns of satisfaction, like a good pantry clean-out (page 32) or closet declutter. Bonus points if I actually sell some of the stuff I'm getting rid of (page 92).

This year, if I run out of tricks, I'm going to put on "Purple Rain" and simply ask myself: Would you rather be 15 again?



#simplestory

Wisdom When You Want It

I vowed to turn off the news tonight. Agitated, I picked up a magazine that came in the mail today and flipped to a random page. I saw a recipe for cheesecake, then turned the page to read: "17 Reasons for Optimism." I wept. Thank you for the encouragement tonight. I really needed it.

-SIERRA HALL @DANGEROUSWONDER



Let's look for meaningful moments in our lives and share them here. Tag your Instagram posts with #simplestory and @LizVaccariello to get them to me.

2 REAL SIMPLE JANUARY 2021

Free Financial Tools Wealth Management



personal

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"This new year, keep abundance in your thoughts and focus on financial well-being."

-Deepak Chopra[™], MD Founder, Chopra Global

Author Deepak Chopra has a mission to empower personal transformation. A healthy, abundance-filled life begins with healthy habits. That's why he's working with Personal Capital to help people reduce stress and find financial confidence.

Start today by using our powerful, free financial tools to see where you stand—now, and for your retirement.

This new year, find financial peace of mind.

Download free financial tools today at

personalcapital.com/realsimple

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Contents

January 2021

ON THE COVER



TO BUY: thegreenvase.com for info.

Feel Better About Your Home, Your Spending, **Even Your Pantry**.....84, 58, 32

The Comfiest Shoes.....38

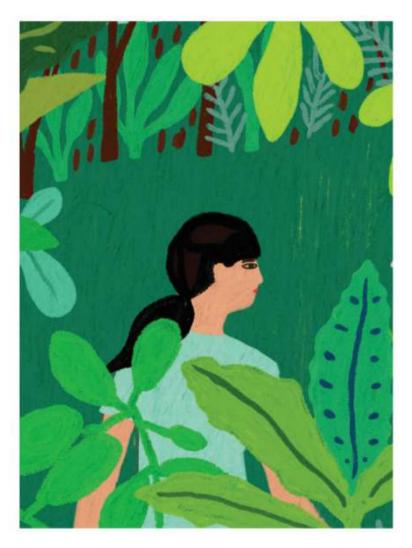


92 Cha-ching! Turn that clutter into cash





76 Colorful breakfasts for a very good morning



66 Self-care rituals to start the year refreshed







100 Dinner ideas to please the whole family

relating



54 Manage long-distance caregiving

Thoughts1	Room Rx
Editor's Note2	Design a Zoom room 22
Real Simple 24/76 Your Words8	Road Test: Food Slash prep time with these fab frozen veggies
My Simple Realization10	The Staple Luscious cream cheese recipes
what we love	
Cozy Up to Bedtime Calming accessories to help you nod off12	the realist Rid Your Shoes of Salt Stains
The Short List Books for every taste14	It's a quick job with household ingredients29
Pretty Smart Beauty buys to simplify your routine16	Things Cooks Know Why everyone needs a cast-iron pan30
Road Test: Beauty Hand products that protect and pamper18	Organizing Challenge Enjoy a smartly stocked and tidy pantry32
Clever Items Little helpers to make your life easier	Degunk Your Devices Banish crud and germs from phones, keyboards, and more

Slash prep time with these
fab frozen veggies24
The Staple Luscious cream cheese recipes
the realist
Rid Your Shoes
of Salt Stains
It's a quick job with
household ingredients29
Things Cooks Know
Why everyone needs
Why everyone needs a cast-iron pan30
a cast-iron pan30
a cast-iron pan30 Organizing Challenge
a cast-iron pan30 Organizing Challenge Enjoy a smartly stocked
a cast-iron pan

5 Ways to Be a
Better Listener
Have more meaningful
conversations40
Good Read
Short on space, Elizabeth
Passarella found an unusua
spot for a nursery43
Modern Manners
Unstinting advice from
Catherine Newman 46
Pet Tricks
Which human health trends
benefit animals too?48
Make a Habit of It
Set a goal and stick to it
with these strategies 50
Keep Older Loved
Ones Safe and Happy
Low- and high-tech
tools to stay connected
from a distance54

	to Be Frugal
.40	Mindful spending isn't just savvy—it's wholesome 58
า	Making It Work Time-saving tweaks
ual .43	to daily routines
	Crystal cave meditation 65
.46	features
nds .48	31 Self-Care Rituals to Set You Up for a Great Year
.50	An inspired idea for every day of January66
.50	Brighten Up Breakfast
У	Easy smoothies, scrambles, and toasts you'll leap out
.54	of bed for76

balance

It Feels Good

Learn the secrets of four women who decluttered their homes
online resale market 92
food
Born This Way
Unattractive fruits
and veggies are just
as delicious99
5 Easy Dinners
Fresh weeknight meals100
Plant Powered
Southeast Asian larb106
Big Batch
One-pot pork and
beans107
who knew?

Surprising Facts About

Think beyond water......108

Staying Hydrated

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Real Simple 24/7

FOLLOW US ONLINE FOR EXCLUSIVE IDEAS, TIPS, AND WAYS TO MAKE LIFE EASIER—EVERY DAY.



MEET
MARTHA UPTON

ASSISTANT EDITOR AT REAL SIMPLE

Favorite seasonal dish:

At holiday gatherings, my grandmother makes one persimmon pudding for the family—and one just for me!

Most recent purchase:

A Rag & Bone bucket hat I'm obsessed with.

Favorite item in your home:

My roommate's Persian cat, Walter.

Ideal weekend plans:

lced coffee and window-shopping.



Ideas for Dry January

Try our practical tips for abstaining from alcohol for the month.

Get the smart tricks at realsimple.com/drinkless.



Planning to Hibernate Until Spring?

You'll need a cozy bed. Pile on the pillows and create the right layers for a sleep sanctuary. **Learn how at realsimple.com/cozybed.**







GREAT BOOKS FOR A FRESH START

We found a dozen motivating reads to help you launch your best year yet.

Page through our picks at realsimple.com/ inspiringbooks.



MIND YOUR MONEY

As you swipe through your feed, get quick financial advice with Money Monday, our new weekly Instagram series.
Follow @real_simple.













Your Words

What Did the Year 2020 Teach You About Yourself?

I always threw things away when they were broken. When I felt broken, I learned I can be repaired.

LINDSAY HALIK, CHICAGO

#RSLOVE "I LEARNED I THRIVE ON INTERACTIONS WITH PEOPLE, EVEN SMALL ONES—A NICE WALK, A COFFEE DATE, HANGING WITH THE PETS. I DON'T NEED MUCH, AND I ENJOY THE SLOWER PACE. BUT I CHERISH THOSE IN MY LIFE I CAN LEAN ON."

@ANDREACOANPHOTO



For sharing this photo with us, @andreacoanphoto will receive our special issue, The Power of Less. If you want your picture to be considered, tag photos on Instagram with #rslove. I'm actually just lazy. Couldn't find time in six months at home to vacuum?

@JGDIAMANTOPOULOS

I'm more resilient than I thought.

When the stay-athome orders were enacted, I did just that. However, instead of feeling isolated, I realized that all the projects I said I would do "someday" were now doable. Someday was here.

KRIS GERRETSEN, ROSEBURG, OREGON

I don't need acrylic nails and hair color to feel beautiful.

O @MRMBEENER

I don't have to go shopping every day. It seems I used to go to a store daily and buy stuff I really didn't need. I'm saving quite a bit of money.

DENISE WILLIAMS, MACUNGIE, PENNSYLVANIA

Having dogs to be responsible for has been the best for our whole family's mental health.

@CORREAKRUEGELJ

I took so much for granted—being able to see friends, go to the movies or a concert. I'll never again take those activities as a given.

SUE KOREN, ROLLING MEADOWS, ILLINOIS My home is way more important to me than I realized. It is my sanctuary. Now I feel better about putting time into its upkeep—it has a new significance.

@AMYCURTIS317

How much I enjoy cooking, baking, and sharing with friends.

DIANN LEWTER, HOUSTON I've always been the one to stay calm, find answers, and fix things in all parts of my life. I learned I can be at peace saying, "I don't know" and "I cannot figure this out" several times a day. ANN RUBLE, CASPER, WYOMING

When my mom said, "Go find something to do! Learn to enjoy your own company," she was really training me for 2020.

@ANNAPOLISANN1111

The events of 2020 taught me just how precious hugs are and that I've grossly

SHARON ZALEWSKI, RICHFIELD, WISCONSIN

underestimated

their value.

I really like gin and cheese.

O @ANGELA9049

I learned to find silver linings.

I stopped griping about isolation and started mailing cards to friends. Doing just a little something to brighten their day really brightened mine.

LISA JESSICK, OLD ORCHARD BEACH, MAINE

The year taught me to stop and listen-

to how you're feeling, to what you need to do or not do. Rest when needed, and make space to play and create.

RACHEL SCOTT. WEST HURLEY, NEW YORK

I can do anything as long as there is a step-by-step YouTube video.

@TRAVELGIRLMEL

I can whip up a decent meal,

improvising with whatever we have on hand. There's no need to run to the grocery store for every little thing. MARY ANNE BAILEY,

ALPHARETTA, GEORGIA

I'm a toilet paper snob!

@BARBARA WILLIAMS_MD



Reader of the Month

VERONICA McLEAVEY-FISHER, 39

COMMERCIAL PRODUCER AND **CO-OWNER OF A WINE SHOP**

What did the year 2020 teach you about yourself?

It's so essential for me to find stillness. We tend to keep our schedules pretty busy. Now, creating quiet time has been a challenge but a necessity.

What's your pet's name? My dog is Bobby.

What do you really call him?

B.D. Boy, as in Baby Dog Boy. That's pretty embarrassing!

Favorite room:

Our living room, where the big couch and the fireplace are. It's where the best holiday decorations end up (which I love).

> Most organized part of your life:

Bill paying—right on time, every time. Good luck catching me with a late fee!

What's always in your car?

A blanket for impromptu, "Let's just sit here for a minute" moments.

Next Question

HOW DO YOU MAKE YOUR MOST DREADED CHORE MORE FUN?

Send an email to yourwords@realsimple.com and let us know your answer to this question. Your response could appear on these pages.





My Simple Realization

"I Hadn't Been Alone All Day"

FOR NEWLY INAUGURATED <u>BARACK OBAMA</u>, ONLY AT THE END OF A LATE NIGHT WAS HE ABLE TO FULLY APPRECIATE THE JOURNEY THAT LED TO THE MOMENT.

MICHELLE AND I attended a total of 10 inaugural balls that evening. Michelle was a chocolate-brown vision in her flowing white gown, and at our first stop I took her in my arms and spun her around and whispered silly things in her ear as we danced to a sublime rendition of "At Last" sung by Beyoncé. At the Commander in Chief's Ball, we split up to dance with two charming and understandably nervous young members of our armed forces.

The other eight balls I'd be hard-pressed to remember.

By the time we got back to the White House, it was well past midnight. A party for our family and closest friends was still going strong in the East Room, with the Wynton Marsalis Quintet showing no signs of letting up. Twelve hours in high heels had taken a toll on Michelle's feet, and since she had to get up an hour earlier than I did to get her hair done for

another church service the next morning, I offered to stay and entertain our guests while she headed to bed.

Just a few lights were on by the time I got upstairs. Michelle and the girls were asleep, the sound of night crews clearing dishes and breaking down tables and chairs barely audible from below. I realized I hadn't been alone all day. For a moment I just stood there, looking up and down the enormous central hall, not yet certain of where each of the many doors led, taking in the crystal chandeliers and a baby grand piano, noticing a Monet on one wall, a Cézanne on another, pulling out some of the books on the shelf, examining small busts and artifacts and portraits of people I didn't recognize.

My mind went back to the first time I had seen the White House, some 30 years ago, when as a young community organizer I had

brought a group of students to Washington to lobby their congressman on a bill to increase student aid. The group of us had stood outside the gate along Pennsylvania Avenue, a few students mugging and taking pictures with disposable cameras. I remember staring up at the windows on the second floor, wondering if at that very moment someone might be looking down at us. I had tried to imagine what they might be thinking. Did they miss the rhythms of ordinary life? Were they lonely? Did they sometimes feel a jolt in their heart and wonder how it was that they had ended up where they were?

I'd have my answer soon enough, I thought. Pulling off my tie, I walked slowly down the hall, turning off what lights remained on.

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what We love

SHED A LITTLE LIGHT

It's a super mini (like, three-inchtall) nightlight that's charged by a USB cable. It offers just the right amount of glow for midnight bathroom runs. **TO BUY:** Lexon Mina LED Portable Light, \$30; store.moma.org.

Cozy Up to Bedtime

A GREAT NIGHT'S SLEEP STARTS WITH A CALMING ENVIRONMENT. THESE <u>REST-INDUCING ACCESSORIES</u> ARE JUST WHAT YOU NEED FOR A DREAMY SANCTUARY.

By Cat Dash

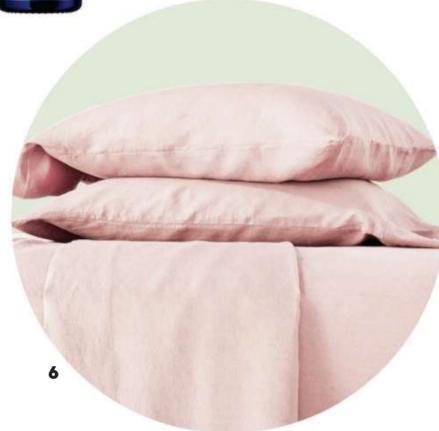






















1 COMFY TOUCHDOWN

The looped weave on this cotton mat makes the texture extra cushy for toes. Plus, it's ethically made by weavers in Guatemala. TO BUY: Steps Mat, from \$180; minna-goods.com.

2 UNDER COVER

Not only will this cotton eye mask block out light, it'll sit pretty on your nightstand when not in use. **TO BUY:** Jalid Rose Eye Mask, \$30; johnrobshaw.com.

3 SCENT TO BED

Diffuse these essential oil blends or apply them topically to relax your mind and body before nodding off. TO BUY: The Sleep Collection, \$19 for 3; woolzies.com.

4 SOOTHING SIPS

Add a cup of herbal tea to your wind-down routine with this caffeine-free looseleaf set. TO BUY: Night Night Sleep Teas Discovery Trio, \$19.50; davidstea.com.

5 RELAXING INFUSION

A modern take on the diffuser, this porcelain version was inspired by a chiminea. TO BUY: Chim Chim Scent Diffuser, \$35: us.hay.com.

6 LUXE FOR LESS

This linen sheet set, naturally cooling for hot sleepers, gets softer every time it goes through the wash. TO BUY: Casaluna 100% Linen Solid Sheet Set, from \$139; target.com.

7 DON'T BE BLUE

These glasses shield your eyes from your devices' blue light, which can interfere with sleep. **TO BUY:** Bella Glasses, \$95: diffeyewear.com.

8 CIRCADIAN CANDLES

Each candle was blended to evoke a different time of day—from a morning ocean tide to an evening bourbon cocktail. TO BUY: AM to PM Scented Candle Set, \$59: brooklinen.com.

The Short List

What Should I Read Next?

TOP PICKS FOR EVERY TASTE

By Kristyn Kusek Lewis

Debut Stunner

In this powerful novel about a Deep South plantation, enslaved Isaiah and Samuel share a private, abiding love that's a refuge from the daily brutality they endure—and that has consequences for everyone around them. The Prophets by Robert Jones Jr. is an original, heartbreaking testament to love, and to the supremacy of good over evil.

Beguiling Suspense Read

The only relic from Andy's troubled childhood is her friend Peter. The two occasionally meet for drinks in London, where they carefully avoid discussing one particular summer: On an abandoned manor decades earlier. they played a game that ended in tragedy. But then Peter disappears, and Andy is forced to untangle what she's tried so hard to forget. Before the Ruins by Victoria Gosling is a lush and layered thriller that mystery lovers will savor.

Historical Fiction

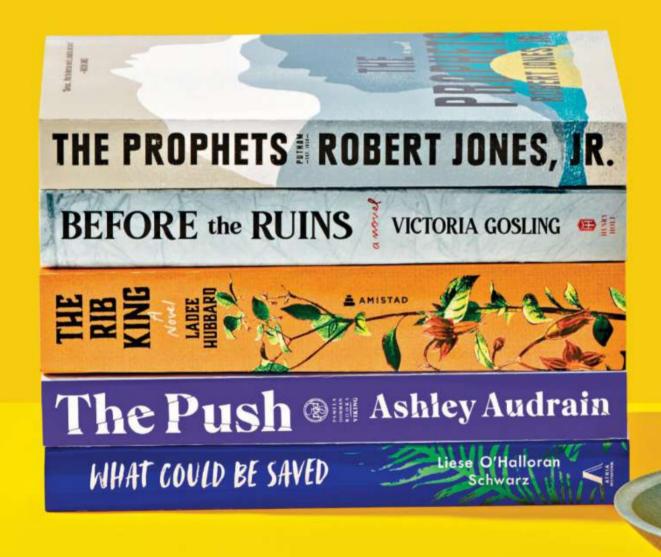
In the early 1900s, the Barclays, a white family with a cadre of Black servants, are desperate for cash. They begin selling their cook's delicious rib sauce and slapping a humiliating caricature of their groundskeeper on the label (without compensating either long-time employee). Through its searing portrayal of exploitation, The Rib King by Ladee Hubbard conveys a modern message about how African American stereotypes are used for profit.

Conversation Starter

After giving birth to her first child, Blythe Connor vows to be the doting mother she never had. But when she finds it difficult to connect with baby Violet, she's alarmed, frustrated, and increasingly convinced there's something dangerously wrong with the girl. The Push by Ashley Audrain is a chilling page-turner that asks provocative questions about nature versus nurture and what makes a good mother.

Sweeping **Family Drama**

Laura Preston ignores her sister's warning and travels to Bangkok to reunite with their brother, who went missing 40 years earlier when they lived in the city for their father's mysterious job. As the story unfurls, shocking family secrets are slowly revealed. What Could Be Saved by Liese O'Halloran Schwarz is a rich, complex novel that shifts between present-day Washington, D.C., and 1970s Thailand—just the kind of book you want to sink into on a winter day.



For more book recommendations, visit realsimple.com/ newbooks.



All It Takes Is A Shake™



Pretty Smart

Best Soap, Bar None

PLUS SEVEN OTHER BEAUTY BUYS
TO SIMPLIFY YOUR ROUTINE
By Heather Muir Maffei



1 JIN SOON **HYPERCARE CUTICLE PUSHER** + REDUCER

Kiss ragged cuticles goodbye with this diamond-tipped tool that exfoliates the skin on your nail beds so there's no need to trim. The rounded edges make it painfree. **TO BUY:** \$32; jinsoon.com.

2 PRAI AGELESS **THROAT & DECOLLETAGE SERUM**

Now you can enjoy a temporary neck lift while watching Netflix. To tighten lax skin, just use the rollerball applicator to glide on this silky serum from cleavage to chin. **TO BUY:** \$45; praibeauty.com.

3 NEXXUS CURL DEFINE CONDITIONER **AND LEAVE IN**

For curl types 3A to 4C, this duo is rich in amino acids and marula oil to enhance the shape and hold of coils. TO BUY: \$15 for leave-in, \$18 for conditioner; at drugstores.



4 RENÉE ROULEAU MINT RENEWAL **CLEANSER**

A wake-up call for a tired complexion, this peppermint oil wash contains biodegradable jojoba beads and lactic acid to degunk pores and brighten. **TO BUY:** \$37.50; reneerouleau.com.

5 KAJA JOYSTICK **BRIGHTENING** UNDEREYE **SETTING POWDER IN BONUS BANANA**

Level up your treatment of undereye circles: Swirl the brush to load, twist open the top, tap off excess, and apply. **TO BUY:** \$18; sephora.com.

6 FENTY SKIN INSTANT RESET OVERNIGHT RECOVERY GEL-CREAM

A nourishing cream in an ingenious tub: The lid has a slot to hold the scooper and a notch so people with long nails can actually open it. **TO BUY:** \$40; fentyskin.com.

7 NEUTROGENA HEALTHY SCALP LINE

Treat your scalp to a spalike experience with ingredients such as soothing tea tree oil and clarifying grapefruit. **TO BUY:** \$12 each; walmart.com.

Road Test

Show of Hands

IF ALL THAT SANITIZING AND SUDSING HAS LEFT YOUR SKIN STRIPPED AND DRY, THESE SIX STANDOUTS (AMONG DOZENS RUBBED ON AND REVIEWED) WILL PROTECT, PLUMP, AND PAMPER FOR A PERFECT 10.

By Anneke Knot



BEST SPF

Supergoop Handscreen SPF 40

Hands are one of the first areas to show sun damage. But this argan-oil-rich, broad-spectrum SPF cream feels so lovely and absorbs so quickly, applying a nickel-size amount is a treat. The large bottle fits in a car's cup holder (hands on a steering wheel are so exposed!), while the mini is great before a gel mani, to shield skin from the UV lamp. **TO BUY:** \$14 for 1 oz., \$38 for 6.76 oz.; supergoop.com.



BEST CREAM

Algenist Genius Liquid Collagen Hand Cream

Finally, there's hope for desiccated Wicked Witch hands! This tube packs serious ingredients to boost volume and brighten. **TO BUY:** \$38; algenist.com.



BEST SOAP

Blueland Hand Soap Starter Set

Fill the glass bottle with water, drop in one tablet, and scrub-a-dub-dub. Sustainability has never looked so chic. TO BUY: \$16; blueland.com.



BEST TO-GO SANITIZER

Touchland Power Mist

The ideal purse mate, this mist zaps germs without leaving skin tight. The vanilla-cinnamon scent is mmm delish. TO BUY: \$12; touchland.com.



BEST MASK

Aveeno Repairing Cica Hand Mask

Slip on gloves lined with shea butter, wait 10 minutes, and remove. Massage excess into cuticles and feel like a new person. TO BUY: \$3; target.com.

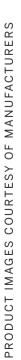


BEST STAPLE

Purell Advanced Hand Sanitizer

This one is trusted by doctor's offices because the 70 percent ethyl alcohol means bacteria won't stand a chance. **TO BUY:** \$3 for 8 oz.; target.com.







KELP, YES!

Pop a cube into your morning smoothie or quick bread recipe for a jolt of extra minerals—and slight umami tang. TO BUY: Kelp Cubes, \$8 for 8; atlanticseafarms.com.



HIT THE SPOT

Cover a stained but beloved garment with these quirky iron-on patches. They come with an easy how-to manual. TO BUY: Golden Iron-On Patches, \$18.50 for 17; sugru.com.



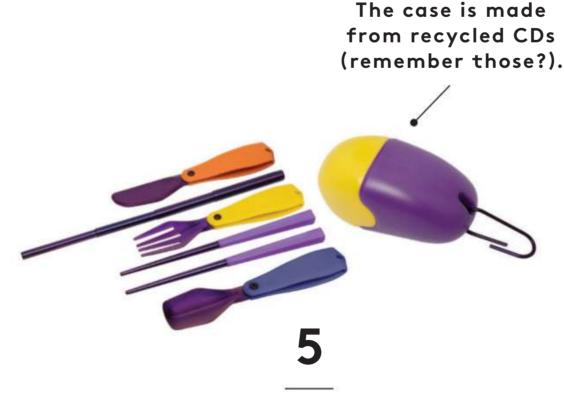
IT'S A KEEPER

At the end of the rainbow or fiscal year-you'll find this 12-folder organizer. An elastic closure holds it all together. **TO BUY:** Accordion Pro Filer in Large, \$48; poketo.com.



LITTLE HELPERS TO MAKE YOUR LIFE EASIER

By Brandi Broxson



DASH AND DINE

Ixnay the single-use cutlery. This portable set includes a knife, fork, spoon, straw, and chopsticks. TO BUY: The Pebble by Otherware, \$59; penatonic.com.



BARE NECESSITY

These waterproof stickons let you go shoeless, protect your soles from hot sand at the beach, and give some grip during yoga class. **TO BUY:** NakeFit, \$20; nakefit.us.



THE BIG ZIPPER

The people asked, Stasher answered: Its popular flat-bottom, dishwashersafe silicone bag is now offered in an almost gallon size (think: sourdough loaf). то виу: Stand-Up Mega, \$30; stasherbag.com.

Your cold season essentials

Supporting your immune system can also be delicious. Mybite's patented technology combines the benefits of vitamins with rich caramel, roasted peanuts and a fluffy center all in a guilt-free chocolatey bite. Yum!



A chocolatey vitamin that balances the nutrition and immune support you need with the sweet indulgence you deserve.

SWEET SELF-CARE Upgrade your daily routine with the perfect companion to

your morning coffee!

2



A SWEET BOOST TO YOUR DAY

3

The 3 p.m. slump is real, we're here to help! A yummy combination of the best energizing B Vitamins with a kick of Caffeine and milk chocolatey goodness.



HEALTH, MADE HAPPY®

Our mission is to help you feel healthy and happy body, mind and taste buds.

- · Just 3 grams of sugar
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Room Rx

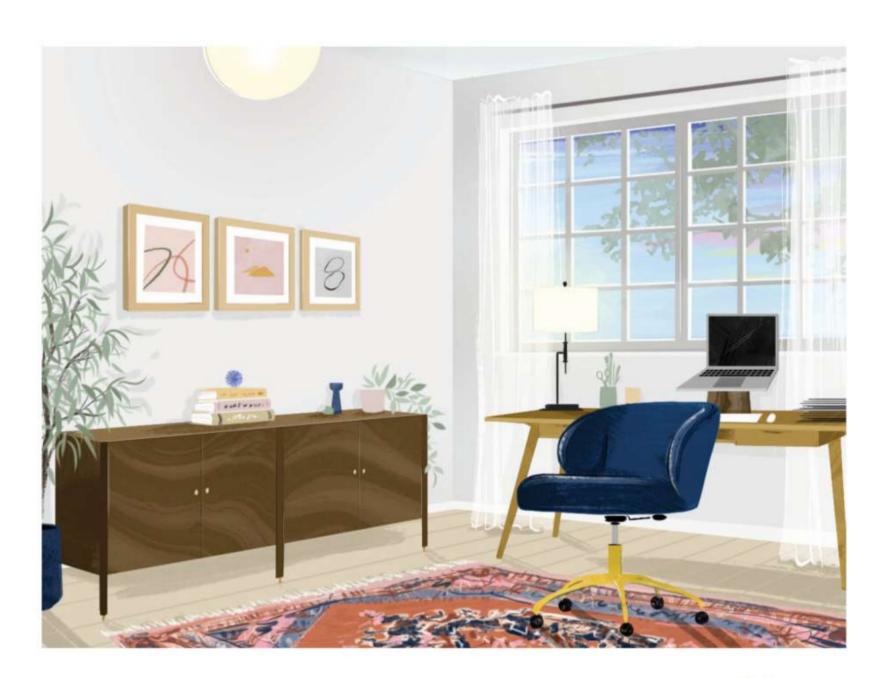
Design a Zoom Room

INTERIOR DESIGNER AMY SKLAR SHOWS HOW TO CREATE A SPACE THAT LOOKS GOOD... AND MAKES YOU LOOK GOOD.

By Leslie Corona



I'm struggling
to find a spot in
my office for
Zoom meetings.
How can I make
the area attractive
for video calls?
—Nayomi,
homeowner in
Portland, Oregon







76









CHOOSE THE RIGHT LIGHT

At night, use a lamp with a white drum shade and soft, warm LED bulb (look for a color temp around 2,700K). It will cast a pleasant glow, whereas overhead lighting and exposed bulbs can be harsh. During the day, sheer curtains can diffuse bright light.

TO BUY: Atticus Metal Table Lamp, \$179; potterybarn.com.

HANG ART, BUT KEEP IT SIMPLE

Find a balance between walls that are too barren and ones that are too busy. Artwork with a lot going on may distract your Zoom mates. If you can, avoid placing a bookshelf directly behind your desk, which can also pull focus. **TO BUY:** *In Between the Lines of Elegance* by Morgan Harper Nichols, from \$44; society6.com.

PICK A PLEASING COMPUTER STAND

Do yourself a huge favor and raise the height of your laptop or desktop to slightly above eye level. It won't just save your neck and shoulders—it will show your face at its best angle. Invest in a nice-looking stand or just make a stack of art books. **TO BUY:** Wooden Macbook Stand, from \$159; yohann.com.

GO GREEN

Indoor trees and hanging plants can add life and color to a bland corner. Keep it low-maintenance by selecting artificial foliage—you'll never run the risk of a sad, wilting plant appearing on camera. **TO BUY:** Faux Potted Eucalyptus Tree, \$199; cb2.com.

Submit your own design dilemmas to room.rx@realsimple.com.

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BEST CAULIFLOWER CRUST

Earthbound Farm Organic Mini Cauliflower Crusts

We were majorly impressed by the flavor and texture of these personal pizza rounds.

Tender right out of the oven and slightly reminiscent of Latin American arepas, they're made from just six ingredients, starting with organic cauliflower. They're great for an easy dinner or next-level snack—just top with marinara sauce and mozzarella or chicken salad.

TO BUY: \$5 for 4 crusts; at grocery stores.



BEST MEAL STARTER

Cascadian Farm Organic Mirepoix Blend

Many stew, soup, and sauce recipes start with painstakingly chopping onions, celery, and carrots. Or just ripping open this bag. **TO BUY:** \$4 for 10 oz.; at grocery stores.



BEST STIR-FRY MIX

Birds Eye Broccoli Stir-Fry

We especially loved the crunchy water chestnuts and celery in this robust, colorful blend. For takeout vibes, simply add rice, tofu, and a dash of soy sauce.

TO BUY: \$2.30 for 14.4 oz.; at grocery stores.



BEST VEGGIE GNOCCHI

Green Giant Cauliflower & Spinach Gnocchi

This produce-packed take on the Italian classic is the perfect vehicle for your favorite sauce. For a delightfully crisp exterior, give them a quick turn in a hot skillet after boiling. **TO BUY:** \$4 for 10 oz.; at grocery stores.



BEST PROTEIN BLEND

Whole Foods Market French-Style Protein Blends

Serve this hearty, protein-rich mix of lentils, beans, leeks, and kale as a side, or top it with olive oil and cheese for a complete meal. **TO BUY:** \$4 for 12 oz.; at Whole Foods Market.



BEST RICED VEGGIE

Alexia Butternut Squash Risotto

Fire up the microwave and quell those comfort-food cravings with this decadent, creamy side.

The Parmesan, thyme, and touch of garlic give it savory depth. **TO BUY:** \$4 for 12 oz.; at grocery stores.

Cook your freezer! Find recipes using frozen meats, fish, and veggies at realsimple.com/frozenfood.



Quick Ideas

1 JAMMY PASTRIES

Roll 2 refrigerated piecrusts into 10-by-12-in. rectangles on a lightly floured surface. Place 1 crust on a parchmentlined baking sheet; spread with 4 oz. softened cream cheese, leaving a 1/2-in. border. Spread 3/4 cup jam over cream cheese. Top with remaining crust and seal edges. Prick holes all over top. Bake at 375°F for 22 minutes. Let cool for 10 minutes. Combine 4 oz. softened cream cheese, 1 cup confectioners' sugar, and 1/4 cup whole milk; drizzle over pastry. Cut into 8 rectangles.

2 CHEESY BAKED PASTA

Cook 12 oz. orecchiette until al dente; add 3 cups broccoli during final 2 minutes. Drain and return to pot. Cook 1 lb. crumbled Italian sausage in a large, oven-safe skillet for 10 minutes. Stir sausage, 2 cups marinara sauce, 4 oz. cream cheese, and 1 tsp. kosher salt into pasta. Return mixture to skillet; sprinkle with ½ cup grated Parmesan. Bake at 375°F until golden and bubbly, 15 to 18 minutes.

3 SMOKED FISH DIP

Coarsely chop 8 oz. smoked trout. Combine with 8 oz. softened cream cheese, 1/2 cup sour cream, 1/4 cup chopped cornichons, 3 Tbsp. finely chopped shallots, 2 Tbsp. chopped chives, 1 tsp. cornichon pickling liquid, and ³/₄ tsp. kosher salt. Top with 1tsp. chopped chives. Serve with crackers or crostini.

By Jenna Helwig Recipes by Ali Ramee



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CHILD HUNGER CAN BE HARD TO RECOGNIZE. BECAUSE THE 1 IN 7 AMERICAN KIDS FACING IT CAN LOOK LIKE ANYONE. ESPECIALLY ME. I AM THE 13-YEAR-OLD BOY WHO GETS INTO FIGHTS AT SCHOOL, NOT BECAUSE I'M A BULLY, BUT BECAUSE I'M HUNGRY. I AM THE 2-YEAR-OLD GIRL WHO CRIES ALL NIGHT, NOT BECAUSE I'M SICK, BUT BECAUSE I WENT TO BED WITHOUT ENOUGH TO EAT. I AM THE 9-YEAR-OLD BOY WHO HOPES A FRIEND INVITES ME TO A SLEEPOVER, NOT FOR FUN, BUT JUST SO I CAN HAVE DINNER. I AM THE 15-YEAR-OLD GIRL WHO GOES FOR WALKS OVER LUNCH, SO MY FRIENDS WON'T KNOW I DON'T HAVE ANYTHING TO EAT. I WAS CREATED BY ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE FROM PHOTOS OF THE 11 MILLION KIDS STRUGGLING WITH HUNGER IN THIS COUNTRY. A FACE THAT CHALLENGES YOU TO SEE HUNGER IN A DIFFERENT LIGHT. I AM WHAT HUNGER LOOKS LIKE IN AMERICA. LEARN MORE AT IAMHUNGERINAMERICA.ORG

reclist

RID YOUR SHOES OF SALT STAINS

Your cute ankle boots may be brand-new—but one winter walk across a salt-strewn parking lot can make them look worn and weathered.

Happily, those unsightly white rings and splotches should disappear easily with a simple solution of two parts white vinegar to one part water. Dampen a clean, white cotton rag (or T-shirt) with the stain-fighting mixture and apply to salty shoes. If they're suede, dab lightly; scrubbing is too rough for the delicate fibers, says

David Mesquita, co-owner of Leather Spa in New York City. When you can no longer see the stains, blot any excess moisture with a dry cloth. With suede shoes, Mesquita adds, take the extra step of brushing the area with a clean toothbrush.

By Rachel Sylvester

Clean your white leather sneakers with our video guide at realsimple.com/whitesneakers.

Things Cooks Know

No Flash in the Pan

TREATED RIGHT, A CAST-IRON PAN CAN LAST FOR AGES, TURNING OUT ONE DELICIOUS MEAL AFTER ANOTHER. LEARN HOW TO COOK IN IT AND CARE FOR IT TO ENSURE A SATISFYING LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIP.

By Jenna Helwig



Why You Need One

IT'S FOR KEEPS

Often passed down through generations, cast-iron cookware is sturdy, virtually indestructible, and frequently less expensive than many brands of stainless-steel pans. You can find 12-inch skillets for under \$30.

IT'S HOT STUFF

The biggest perk of these pans is that they can get blazing hot, says Charlotte Druckman, author of Stir, Sizzle, Bake: Recipes for Your Cast-Iron Skillet. "That makes them excellent at searing, whether you're cooking steak or want crispy-edged cornbread." Remember, though, that the pan doesn't always heat evenly, so move it around the burner while you cook. And the handle can be scorching—some pans come with a slip-on silicone handle, but if yours didn't, use a potholder.

IT'S NONSTICK(ISH)

"I call cast iron 'nature's nonstick,'" says Seamus Mullen, a chef at the Institute of Culinary Education.

In fact, the more you cook with it, the more the seasoning builds up, making the pan even slicker.

IT'S TOUGHER THAN YOU THINK

While wooden spoons, silicone spatulas, and tongs are fine tools to use with cast iron, metal utensils are good too, within reason. A little scraping with a metal spatula can even help keep the surface smooth.

IT'S VERSATILE

Fried chicken, stir-fries, biscuits, brownies—there isn't much a well-seasoned cast-iron pan can't handle. The only thing to avoid is prolonged cooking of highly acidic foods, like tomato sauce, since the iron can make the food taste metallic. But feel free to add a splash of wine or spritz of lemon juice.

IT'S EASYGOING

Your pan can travel from stove to oven to broiler and even to table, for family meals or casual dinner parties.

The Scoop on Seasoning

WHAT IT MEANS

The seasoning is a thin layer of oil baked into the iron; it's what gives the pan its nonstick quality. Most new pans come preseasoned and are ready to go right away. If you buy a vintage cast-iron pan, you may need to restore it (see below).

HOW TO BUILD IT UP

The more you use the pan, the more seasoned—and more nonstick—it becomes. As the layers of oil increase, it's easier to brown vegetables and get a good sear on meats and fish.

HOW TO RESTORE IT

Mullen suggests covering rust spots with a dab of oil and buffing with a paper towel. If the seasoning deteriorates due to stuck-on food or overzealous cleaning (you'll know by the ashy bald spots on the surface), you need to reseason the pan. Thankfully, this is easier than it sounds. Mullen is a firm believer in the "low and slow" method. "Preheat the oven to the lowest setting, about 180 degrees Fahrenheit," he says. "Add a generous layer of olive oil to the pan, and leave it in the oven for several hours." Remove the pan, pour off the oil, wipe the pan clean, then place it upside down on the oven rack. Put a baking sheet on the bottom rack to catch any drips. Increase the oven temperature to 400 degrees and season for another hour.

Cleaning and Storing

LESS IS MORE

A quick rinse and wipe with a towel is often enough to clean a cast-iron pan after use.

A LITTLE SOAP IS OK

Contrary to popular belief, if the pan is well cared for, a touch of dish soap won't break down the seasoning. So if there's a real oil slick happening, go ahead and squirt on some cleanser.

A RINSE WON'T ALWAYS CUT IT

Even on well-seasoned pans, food can sometimes get scorched onto the surface. In that case, Druckman says to fill the skillet halfway with water and heat it over medium-high. The water will boil and soften whatever is stuck. "Then use a spatula to scrape off the nastiness," she says. Repeat as needed.

DON'T LET IT AIR-DRY

To prevent rust, always wipe the pan immediately after washing. Rub a tiny bit of neutral oil (like canola, vegetable, or grapeseed) on the cooking surface and up the sides. Store the pan with a paper towel on top to absorb excess oil and prevent scratches.



Our skillet banana pancake is a deliciously simple way to feed a crowd. Find the recipe at realsimple.com/bananpancake.

Organizing Challenge

The New Pantry Rules

THERE'S NOTHING LIKE A PANDEMIC TO MAKE YOU QUESTION THE WAY YOU'VE BEEN STASHING YOUR NONPERISHABLES. EXPERTS REVEAL HOW TO MAINTAIN THIS SPACE FOR EVERYDAY COOKING AND EXTENDED USE.

By Laura Fenton



3

Pour into clear containers.

The experts we spoke to agree that decanting boxes and bags of food into see-through vessels is a must for a well-organized pantry. It saves space, of course—particularly when a package contains almost as much air as food. But you can also quickly see how much you have, making meal planning and grocery list writing easier. As a bonus, it reduces the visual clutter in your pantry. And if you go with airtight containers, decanting will keep your staples fresh longer.

4

Use a matching collection.

This may feel fussy, but Gill says having uniform vessels "is one of those little things that make a big difference." Your pantry will immediately appear more organized, and you won't have to play find the matching lid. It doesn't have to be expensive. Joe Yonan, author of *Cool Beans*, uses mason jars and masking tape to manage his dry goods. If there are cooking instructions you want to save, cut off the label and tape it to the container.

5

Shop for the space you have.

When trying to figure out how many staples to keep on hand, it's easy to get worked up about preparedness these days. Some people say you need a week's supply; others say a year's. The short answer: Stock what your storage space allows.

Get in Gear



3-TIER BAMBOO EXPANDING SHELF

The steps make it easy to see—and snatch—what you need. **TO BUY:** \$35; containerstore.com.



COLORFUL MASKING TAPE

Up your labeling game by using tape in pretty hues. Grab a marker and start writing! **TO BUY:** \$10 for 8 rolls; michaels.com.



LYNK SLIDE OUT DRAWER IN WOOD AND CHROME

even the back corners of a pantry become accessible with these simple-to-install drawers.

TO BUY: From \$70; williams-sonoma.com.

1

Do a big clean-out.

We don't usually think of "decluttering" food, but professional organizer Shira Gill says this is a key step in tidying the pantry, especially when you want to make sure it's stocked with essentials. "Take everything out, and get real about what you're going to cook with," she advises. Box up any unopened nonperishables and donate them to your local food pantry. Challenge yourself to spend a week incorporating all the little bits left over into soups, stews, pasta dishes, and trail mixes.

2

(Mostly) disregard expiration dates.

According to the USDA, with the exception of infant formula, expiration dates can largely be ignored. Canned and jarred foods, dried beans, and many sweeteners can last for years. (But discard cans with dents, rust, or swelling.) For things that go rancid more quickly, like oils and whole-grain flours, use your nose as a guide, says chef Vivian Howard, author of *This Will Make It Taste Good*: "As long as it looks good and smells good, it should be fine."

6

Designate a spot for extras.

If you prefer to shop in bulk, you'll need a dedicated place for the excess, says Jacqueline Darrow, a design consultant at California Closets. Get a basket or bin, label it "back stock," and place it on an outof-the-way shelf so it doesn't take up space in your high-traffic area. For purchases like cases of pet food or six-packs of tomato sauce, Gill recommends removing the individual items from their packaging so you can more easily see what you have. And whenever you make your grocery list, check your back stock. You don't want yet another jar of cinnamon or can of chickpeas.

7

Stockpile only what you love.

When you think of filling a pantry for a rainy day (or future shelter-in-place order), you might think of canned vegetables and tuna. But if your family doesn't enjoy those foods, there's no sense in stocking up on them, Yonan says: "You should have things you like. Don't put something in your pantry that won't inspire you to cook."

8

Bring in flavor.

Cooking from the pantry can be a dreary task if you're stuck with just the staples. Howard recommends also stocking flavor boosters. Try pickles, sauerkraut, pesto, jams, and spice blends, like furikake (a Japanese mix that includes seaweed and sesame seeds) and everything bagel seasoning. Homemade versions of many of these boosters are in Howard's book. "These goodies add interest without a lot of extra work," she says. Yonan suggests dried mushrooms, nuts, seeds, dried fruits, and his new favorite condiment, jarred Chinese chili crisp.

What's the secret
to truly delicious
pantry meals?
A stash of flavor
boosters, like pickles,
pesto, and jams.

9

Look beyond the kitchen.

When professional organizer Tanisha Porter, owner of Natural Born Organizers, moved to Los Angeles, her kitchen was seriously short on storage space. So she took advantage of an underutilized wall in her dining area. She purchased floorto-ceiling bookshelves and wicker baskets that fit the shelves, and she used the setup as a pantry. "It was functional, organized, and aesthetically pleasing," she says.

10

Build maintenance into your routine.

Rotate your stock as you put away groceries, says Marissa Hagmeyer, co-owner of Neat Method. "I take five minutes to decant and bring older items to the front." Yonan recommends rounding up as you cook to avoid remnants: If making two cups of rice means just a half cup remains in the pantry, cook it all now and freeze the extra, rather than leaving little bits.



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FRESH STEP We Speak Cat





Degunk Your Devices

YOUR TECH HAS BEEN GETTING A WORKOUT

THIS YEAR, AND IT NEEDS MORE THAN A

RARE CLEANING (OR PERFUNCTORY WIPEDOWN).

KEEP EVERYTHING SPOTLESS WITH THESE TIPS.

By Caroline Mullen

Cellphones and Tablets

When Charles Gerba, PhD, a virology professor at the University of Arizona, analyzed various household surfaces, his team found that cellphones had 10 times more bacteria than most toilet seats. Need any more reason to wipe yours down? To clean the case, remove it, spritz a 50-50 solution of water and white vinegar onto a microfiber cloth, and rub evenly. Tackle any grooves in the case with a cotton swab dipped in the solution. For the device itself, just use a soft, lint-free cloth. Don't jam swabs into ports or headphone jacks, which can shove grime deeper in and leave fuzz behind; a can of compressed air is your best bet there. And you generally don't want to put alcohol or hydrogen peroxide on your devices, says Leanne Stapf, chief operating officer at the Cleaning Authority, a housecleaning service. Those liquids can break down the oil-repelling coating on most phones and tablets, making them more susceptible to damage and greasy fingerprints. But if you want to disinfect your device, Apple and other manufacturers have updated their guidelines to permit using 70 percent isopropyl alcohol wipes. They're more effective than those UV disinfecting boxes, according to Gerba.

When using wipes designed for electronics, wring out as much moisture as possible before touching them to the device.

Earbuds

Think about it: They live in your ears, which are probably not the cleanest, and you use your hands to put them in and take them out multiple times a day. So dab the microphone and speaker mesh with a dry cotton swab to loosen any gunk, then—avoiding the mesh—wipe down the plastic parts with a cloth lightly dampened with isopropyl alcohol. Apple warns against cleaning earbuds with any other liquid; alas, those babies are not waterproof.

Keyboards

That old qwerty can make you really queasy when you consider all the crumbs and germs that have colonized its crevices. (Pretty sure there's granola detritus dating back to the Obama administration in there!) Stapf recommends a oncea-month cleaning with a lightly water-dampened microfiber cloth. (Avoid chemical cleaners, which can eat away at the letter pads.) Loosen anything caked on with an old toothbrush, and force out hidden crud with compressed air.

Screens

Coffee filters can be very effective at clearing off TV screens and computer monitors, Stapf says, because unlike paper towels, they don't deposit residue. Some screens can be wiped with a damp cloth, but check the owner's manual—most of them exist online now—before you do anything you might regret.

Remotes and Controllers

Thanks to the rubbery buttons, remotes and game controllers retain crumbs from seemingly every bag of chips ever eaten within a 10-foot radius. Andy Babb, chief games officer at Super League Gaming, suggests short bursts of compressed air and electronics cleaning wipes, like Windex Electronics Wipes (\$5.20; target.com). Wring out as much moisture from the wipes as possible before using.

Game Consoles

Your kids might be battling flesheating zombies on their Xbox, but your fight is with the grossness in the console's crevices. Keep microfiber cloths nearby for your kids to regularly and gently remove dust and dirt, Babb says. You know what's more threatening to your children than a pack of hellhounds? The idea that dusty systems run slower! (OK, our experts couldn't confirm that dust actually slows them down, but the possibility may be all the motivation kids need to keep those vents clear.) To remove encrusted gunk, Babb recommends electronics cleaning wipes.

Smart (and "Dumb") Speakers

Speakers and liquids don't mix—unless muddy, muffled bass is the acoustic effect you're going for—so avoid wet wipes and cleaning solutions. Instead, remove debris with dry microfiber cloths. To keep fabric speakers from getting stained, place them far away from, say, oilspitting pans on the stove. If they do end up spattered, some companies (like Sonos) make replacement mesh covers. For speakers made of metal or plastic, reach for the wrung-out tech wipes—but go easy.

5 GENERAL RULES FOR CLEANING TECH

ALWAYS UNPLUG devices before cleaning them.

REMOVE BATTERIES before cleaning.

NEVER SPRAY CLEANER directly onto a device.

SPRITZ LIQUIDS LIGHTLY onto a cloth and wring out.

WHEN IN DOUBT, consult the device's manual.

Road Test

Happy Feet

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By Flavia Nunez



BEST FOR ARCH SUPPORT

Olukai Ku'una Slippers

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TO BUY: \$120; olukai.com.



BEST FOR COLD FEET

Ugg Coquette Slipper

If your feet are like ice blocks no matter the season, a snug, sheepskinlined slide is in order.
Choose from seven colors to give those frozen toes some style.

TO BUY: \$120; ugg.com.



BEST FOR WIDE FEET

Crocs Classic Slide

There's a reason the brand known for jolie laide clogs is still kicking after nearly 20 years:
The featherweight material is cushiony and comfy for even the most Fred Flintstone of feet.

TO BUY: \$25; crocs.com.



BEST FOR SWEATY FEET

Nauseni Original Slippers

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BEST BAREFOOT FEEL

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just a little extra
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support—these cableknit booties are a step up
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TO BUY: \$30:

TO BUY: \$30; bearpaw.com.



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5 Ways to Be a Better Listener

IN THESE PINGING, BUZZING, DISTRACTION-PACKED TIMES, ACTIVE LISTENING IS HARDER THAN EVER. HERE'S HOW TO GIVE SOMEONE YOUR FULL ATTENTION—AND MAKE EVERY CONVERSATION COUNT.

By Jennifer King Lindley

Ask (lots of!) the right questions.

"But wait—isn't it impossible to eat keto with little kids at home?" "What was the look on his face when he told you?" And don't forget a good old "Tell me more!" Let sincere interest guide your queries, says Ellen Hendriksen, PhD, author of How to Be Yourself: Quiet Your Inner Critic and Rise Above Social Anxiety. Not only does asking questions demonstrate how engaged you are, it's also a great way to make a good first impression, research shows.

Pretend you're watching a movie.

"Immerse yourself in the person's story," says Rebecca Shafir, author of The Zen of Listening: Mindful Communication in the Age of Distraction. "Read their body language for the message behind their words. Words often only offer a glimpse of how someone really feels." They might say they are "fine-totally fine" with the breakup. Why, then, are they shredding their napkin into bits? "Watch them, stay quiet between their sentences, and forget yourself your agenda, your judgments—just as you do at the movies," Shafir says. "At the theater, we listen with curiosity, we listen to understand. We don't interrupt—because it's not about us."



2

Put the other person in the spotlight.

"You want to convey that the speaker has your complete attention," says Barbara Greenberg, PhD, a clinical psychologist in Weston, Connecticut. Stop watering the plants. Look at the person; point your body in their direction to signal that your focus is on them. And leave your phone in your bag or another room. One study found that when two people talked with a cellphone in view, they felt less empathy and connection. Paying attention is also a useful time-saver, especially at work: You won't have to repeat the conversation an hour (or week) later.

Repeat the important stuff.

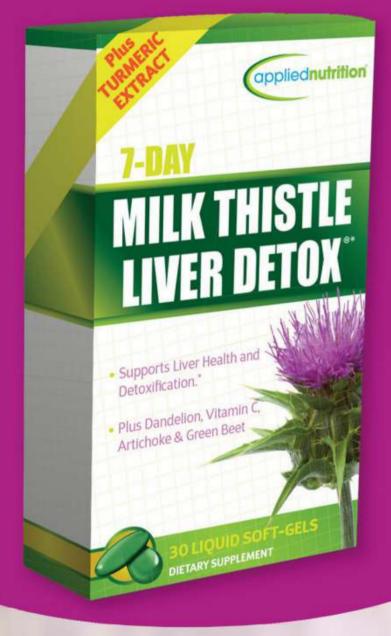
For tough talks—a disagreement with your mother, a vent session with a friend who's going through a messy divorce—it can help if you repeat the gist of their crucial comments. ("Wow. It sounds like you feel really overwhelmed by all the new responsibilities you have.") "Even if you don't agree with everything the other person says, they will feel understood," Hendriksen says. And that appreciation means they'll likely lend you an ear when you need it most.

5

Don't solve their problems.

A common listening pitfall is trying to have all the answers. Instead of fully hearing out a friend, you're scrolling through your brain, concocting a hasty solution to their complicated health issue. ("But have you tried vitamin D?") "You need a change of mindset," says Vanessa Marin, a sex and relationship therapist in Los Angeles. "As a listener, your most important job is to just try to understand the person. That's often what people want most."

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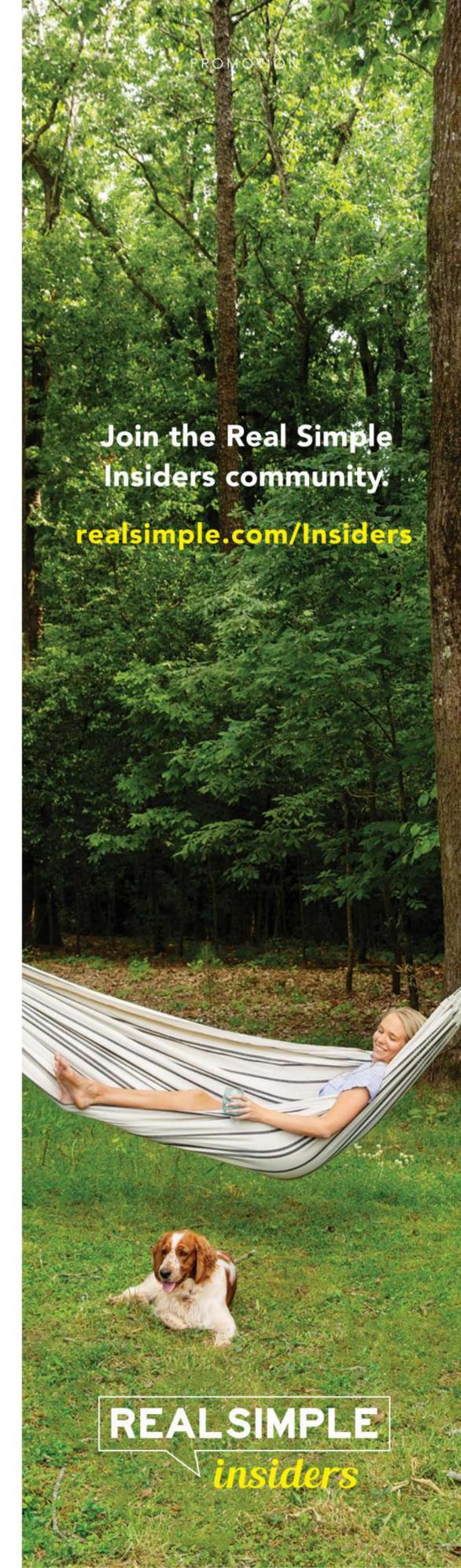
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Why Yes, My Baby Does Sleep in a Closet

AND THAT'S NOT CHANGING ANYTIME SOON.

ELIZABETH PASSARELLA ACTUALLY WELCOMES THE DISCOMFORT

OF LIVING IN A SMALL SPACE WITH THREE KIDS.





WHEN I GOT PREGNANT with my third child, my mother's first words to me were: "Oh, Elizabeth, where are you going to put that baby?"

I told her the same thing I'd told her five years earlier, when my second child was born. "I'm putting him in the closet."

In my defense, it's a big closet. A walk-in (that's it, above). For a New York City apartment, it's palatial. And before I go any further, I want to remind everyone that billions of people around the world would see my 1,200-square-foot apartment as a downright luxury for a family of five. Those people are for the most part not, however, my friends and family living in the South, where I grew up, and where my mother wasn't the only one wondering where we were going to put that baby.

When my husband and I moved into our apartment 13 years ago, the closet was almost empty. Most of the apartment was empty. We had no children, no sneaker collections or boxes of sports trophies from high school. In all honesty, we had no business buying a two-bedroom apartment on our salaries (and with my lack of understanding of how mortgages work), but that's a story for another time. Upon walking through the place just before the closing, my mother-in-law declared that, despite the fact that the real estate agent claimed there was no place to put a washer and dryer in the unit, due to complicated water hookup locations, she could make it happen. And she did. The washer went in the bottom of one closet, in the smaller, second bedroom, and we plugged a ventless dryer into the wall in the main bedroom's closet, down the hall. I mean, it took up a fair amount of space, but what else were we going to put in there?

Turns out: our kids.

Not the first kid, of course. She got a bedroom. But when the second came along two years later, well, it seemed foolish to interrupt his sister's sleep by putting him in the nursery. The closet was huge, we reasoned. Why not throw a mini crib next to our hanging clothes? I shopped the idea around to fellow parents-even my own-and got enthusiastic thumbs-ups. New York City couples had been shoehorning cribs into bathrooms and alcoves for ages. My father reminded me that I slept in my parents' condo closet when I was born. ("It did have a window," he said. "But did it have a dryer?" I thought.) Our idea was a go. Heck, it was practically a family tradition.

After more than 20 years in Manhattan, I've learned there's a limit to the small-space-living hijinks that will entertain old friends over brunch on a trip back home, or pacify your nosy aunt during Christmas dinner. Once our second child outgrew his crib, we decided to swap rooms with our kids. They got the large main bedroom, complete with bunk beds and tons of open, carpeted flooring and toy storage. We took the smaller bedroom, which barely fit our queen bed. My bedside table is a stool, but there's a television on the wall, and it suits my husband and me fine. What's more, our out-of-the-box thinking made for good conversation.

"Swapping, huh? That's actually pretty smart!"

"I think it's wonderful when siblings share a room."

"Tell me again about your weird dryer."

But like I said, there's a limit. If you push things too far, people start to question your sanity. When, at age 40, I got pregnant with our third child, the chorus grew concerned.

I've let go of my need for order and cleanliness until third-grade math no longer takes place at my dining room table—or Jesus returns to earth, which is starting to feel more imminent.

"So now you're going to move, right?" "Um, I don't think so," I said.

One afternoon, while walking through the lobby of our building, I saw a crew leaving for the day. They'd been renovating a neighbor's apartment. "Could you rip out some old shelving from my closet?" I asked the boss, Louis.

He sent a few guys the next day. They tore down the bulky, inefficient storage in the main bedroom's closet and patched the walls. I ordered wallpaper, a blue-andorange safari scene with leopards running under acacia trees. A few weeks before my due date, my husband and I mapped out an Elfa system from the Container Store to run along one wall, just enough to hold his pared-down wardrobe and a few drawers for the baby. Even my mother was impressed with the result. I heard her tell a friend over the phone.

Today, that closet is still the prettiest room in our home. The baby is almost 3. In the past year, as we, like everyone else, have lived more of our lives-school, work, everything-in our small home, the chorus of curious voices has gotten much, much louder.

"Y'all can't stay in that apartment with three growing kids."

"A girl and boy can only share a room for so long." "He's going to climb out of the crib! And then what?"

I try to keep it light. I text my mother photos of triple bunk beds (yes, they exist). I constantly refresh real estate listings, but then I remember how much I love my building and my neighbors and how much I hate—really hate moving. (I dream we might be able to afford a larger apartment in our building, eliminating the need for a moving truck and allowing me to leisurely carry over a couple of boxes a day for approximately eight months.) The truth is, our current situation is hard and uncomfortable at times. What I've decided is that it is completely OK. I've been promised many things in my lifefaithfulness, love, loyalty. Comfort is often, but not always, the by-product of having those things in abundance; it isn't the goal.

When I rock my toddler to sleep, because he's my last baby and I'm a sucker, and I stand, holding him across my torso while swaying back and forth against my husband's shirts, it is uncomfortable. When my husband and

I yell at each other within earshot of our children, because we have nowhere private to fight about how much golf he played last weekend, it is uncomfortable (for the kids, mostly). When it is freezing outside, and my kids are wired, and we have zero game rooms or trampolines, it

can be uncomfortable. This may sound hard-hearted, but I don't care. Because everyone's life, in every city and town, is uncomfortable in some way.

My friend Vanessa lives in Tucson, Arizona, where she has breathtaking vistas of saguaro cacti and a newly renovated bedroom suite off one side of her house. In the summer, though, the heat will singe her arm hairs down to little smoking coils if she stays outside too long. I've known fellow New Yorkers who moved into spacious apartments only to find out that the neighbor upstairs plays the drums at 1 a.m. Some friends have big houses with guest bedrooms, but then an aging parent moves in, with all the uncomfortable responsibilities that brings. My sister once lived in a town without a Target, for heaven's sake. Even Manhattan has a Target.

So when my children complain—about their bunk beds being creaky or the fact that we don't have space for guinea pigs-I say, "You have more than enough, and no one promised you comfort." Then I leave the room before they roll their eyes, hoping they learn to compromise and be a little more patient. As I hiss at them to keep their voices down for the two hours

their baby brother is sleeping, because his closet is basically in their room, I hope they learn that it's important to sacrifice for others. I've learned to let go of my need for order and cleanliness until third- and fifth-grade math no longer take place at my dining room table-or Jesus returns to earth, which is starting to feel more imminent. Those are the welcome lessons in discomfort. And those are the reasons we aren't moving. At least not until the baby learns to climb out of the crib.





ABOUT THE

Elizabeth Passarella writes the Southern Graces column for Southern Living. Her memoir, Good Apple: Tales of a Southern Evangelical in New York, will be published this month. (Guess where she keeps her extra copies of the book.)

Modern Manners

REAL SIMPLE'S ETIQUETTE EXPERT,

CATHERINE NEWMAN, OFFERS

HER BEST ADVICE ON

YOUR SOCIAL QUANDARIES.

C.S. ASKS...

Recently, a member brought her work friend and wanted her to join. We were forced to vote in front of her on whether to accept her, and we felt like we had to say yes. She has attended a few meetings and has a very different personality from the rest of us—she's quite selfish and out of touch. The original member who brought her in has no idea we don't like her. What should we do?

Can we pause for a moment over the voting in front of the new member? Was it *Lord of the Flies* night? The person who invited her mishandled this, and the group should agree not to make decisions this way again. Meanwhile, someone you don't like has joined your club, forcing you to weigh the yuck of enduring her company (and gossiping about her) against the yuck of excluding her. Try cuing her about the book group's norms. It may be helpful to spell out what's missing now: "We make sure everyone gets a chance to speak." Remind yourself, too, that differences can be challenging in a good way.



M.B. ASKS...

I'm expecting my first child. My parents are already grandparents to my niece, who calls my dad another culture's word for grandfather. This feels like appropriation. I'd prefer we use "grandpa," but I don't want to cause a family rift. Any advice?



ABOUT CATHERINE

The author of *How to* Be a Person: 65 Hugely Useful, Super-Important Skills to Learn Before You're Grown Up, Catherine Newman has shared her wisdom on matters ranging from family and friends to happiness and pickling in numerous publications. She gets advice from her husband and two opinionated, largely grown children in Amherst, Massachusetts.

Typically, we call people what they want to be called. If your dad wanted to be grandpère because he spent a week in Paris? That might be an awkward affectation, but it would be fine from a political standpoint, since French people aren't oppressed in the U.S. and we don't have a history of colonizing France. Cultural appropriation, on the other hand, describes a dominant group taking on an element of a historically oppressed or disadvantaged culture. I'm guessing the name at issue is in this territory, and you're right to resist it. Plus, it's totally fine for grandkids to use different names: My father-in-law has 17 grandchildren and almost as many monikers. Teach your baby the name you're comfortable with, and if your dad pushes back, explain why.

M.F. ASKS...

For our engagement, we've received some home decor gifts with cutesy or personalized messages (a "Live Laugh Love" frame, art that says "M.F. + A.M. established 2021"). It's not at all my style. I like to purge things we don't want or use—is it rude to donate these items?

> The meaning of life is in our relationships, not the objects associated with them. Someone cares about you and got you a present to celebrate! You're so lucky. Write them a killer thank-you note and say as much. Then, by all means, let go of anything you don't want. Give it away if it could bring happiness to someone else; throw it away if not. If your gifters live nearby, though, maybe don't donate bespoke artwork to a local thrift store, where it could be spotted.

L.R. ASKS...

I rent a room from a male homeowner. The first time I did laundry, rather than tell me my load was done, he put everything in the dryer. I had set a timer to check on it and was truly aggravated. My panties were in there! He doesn't understand why I got upset. Your advice?

> Given that your landlord didn't just leave your wet clothes on top of the washer, he might have incorrectly assumed he was doing you a favor. Clarify your boundaries—"Please don't touch my laundry"-and reassure him you'll always set a timer to check on it. Then put your number in his phone and ask him to text you if he ever goes to use a machine and notices your laundry cycle has finished.

S.C. ASKS...

Homes are close together where I live, and three nearby houses have wind chimes in the front yards. Here's the problem: I hate the sound of wind chimes—it reminds me of clashing tin cans. Throughout the day and night, and especially when it's windy (I live in Chicago), I hear them. I'm not close with any of the neighbors. How should I handle this?

> Unlike barking dogs, which folks can't always quiet, or leaf blowing, to which many homeowners seem to have an unholy commitment, wind chimes are more of a discretionary noise problem—nobody would claim they're necessary or out of their control. If you played your favorite music in your yard at the same volume, people would likely not hesitate to complain. Of course, this is just aesthetic preference; one person's pentatonic tinkling is another person's "Baby Shark." Try framing it as your problem: "Awkwardly, I turn out to dislike the sound of wind chimes! Would you be willing to move them to the side of your house that's farther from mine? I'd be so grateful." Reasonable neighbors will either relocate the chimes or take them down altogether.





HAVE AN ETIQUETTE QUESTION?

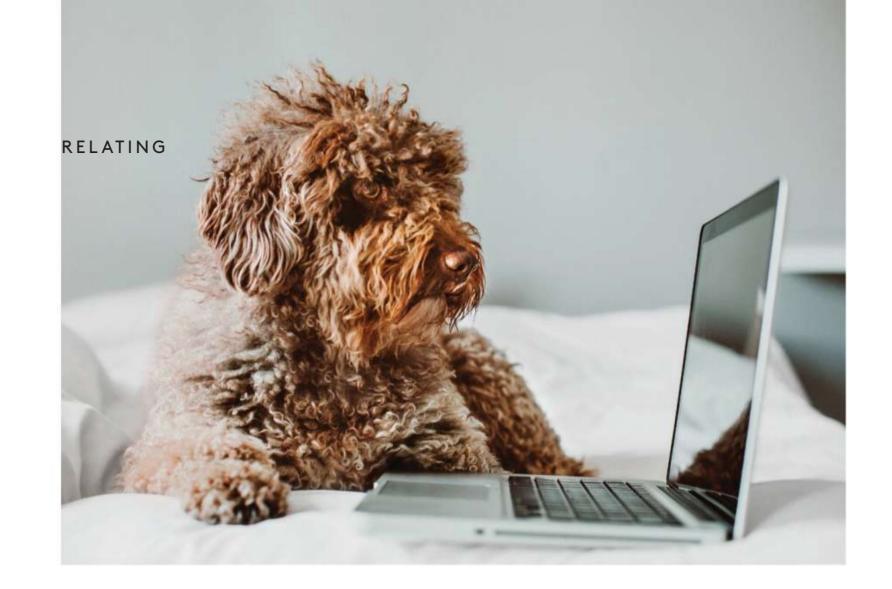
Nover your phone's camera here to submit your question for Catherine, or email her at modernmanners@realsimple.com.



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Pet Tricks

What's Good for the Goose

MAY NOT BE GOOD FOR THE GANDER (OR DOG OR CAT). FIND OUT WHICH HUMAN HEALTH TRENDS TO CONSIDER, SKIP, AND TRY FOR YOUR PET.

By Juno DeMelo

CONSIDER CBD

Preliminary science suggests that CBD, the cannabis-derived compound, may help some pets with epilepsy and osteoarthritis-related pain. If you're interested in it and your vet approves and it's available where you live—look for a certificate of analysis for the chew or oil. That's a thirdparty laboratory verification of the product's contents; make sure it has less than 0.3 percent THC.

SKIP Coconut Oil

The stuff you cook with contains medium-chain triglycerides, which may slow cognitive decline.
So aging pets with neurological conditions might benefit. But the other purported effects of coconut oil—better immunity, weight loss, less inflammation—are mostly not backed by science. Talk to your vet for guidance on any supplements.

TRY Telemedicine

Talking over the phone, by text, or via video chat cannot replace regular in-office visits. But telemedicine is great if you need help deciding whether to seek in-person treatment, if you're monitoring an ongoing problem, or if you want to consult a specialist who isn't within driving distance. It can be especially helpful if your pet hates to travel (have you ever tried to get a cat in a carrier?) and during, well, a global pandemic.

OUR EXPERTS

MARTHA G. CLINE, DVM, VETERINARY NUTRITIONIST WITH RED BANK VETERINARY HOSPITALS IN NEW JERSEY

STEPHANIE McGRATH, DVM, NEUROLOGIST AND ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF CLINICAL SCIENCES AT THE VETERINARY TEACHING HOSPITAL AT COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY



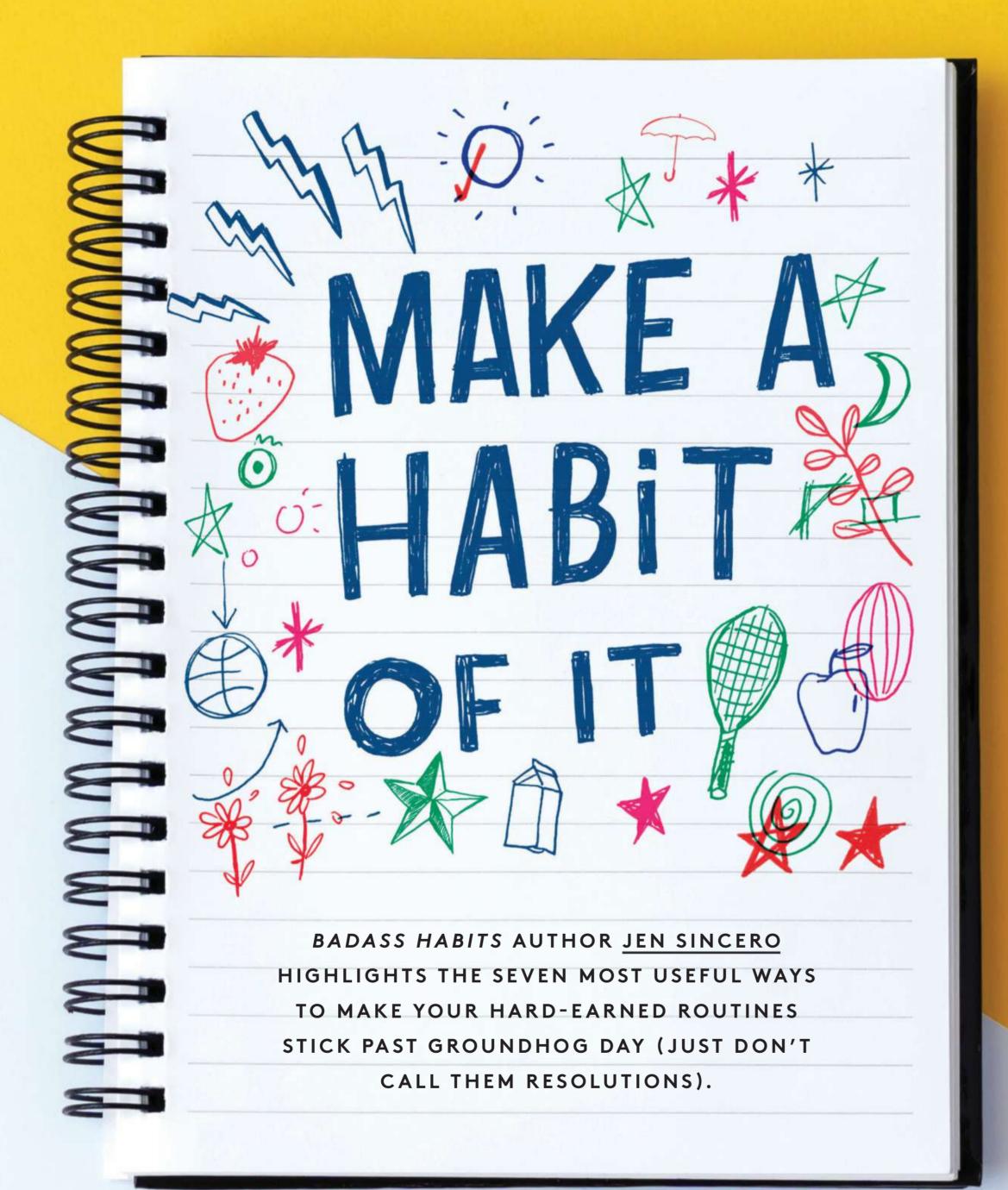
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MASTERING THE powerful, positive mindset that's required to keep upping your habits game is all about staying aware, shifting your focus when you catch yourself wandering down Woe-Is-Me Lane, and consciously thinking thoughts that are aligned with where you want to go and who you want to be. When it comes to building great habits and ditching lousy ones, your commitment to staying focused on who you're becoming, regardless of who you are right now, is the mightiest power you've got.

2

Anticipate your distractions.

Get your notebook, think about a habit you're trying to form, and write down everything you can think of—screwing around on Twitter, suddenly making a lasagna, brushing the dog—that might block your ability to participate. Please also make a list of the people in your life who may be too partylicious to be around while you give up drinking, too pessimistic to hang out with while you do your part to help end world hunger, too chatty to talk with while you quit gossiping—and make a point to limit your time with them.

Develop a mightier mantra.

One of the most powerful tools for habit transformation is also one of the simplest—the almighty mantra. You already use mantras all the time, whether you realize it or not: "I can't lose this pregnancy weight." "I hate my ears." "I always date crazy people." You have already created the "reality" in which you exist via the thoughts, habits, and actions you've repeated over and over throughout your life. You will experience whatever you believe. And you will believe whatever you repeatedly tell yourself is true. Which is why ditching those types of mantras and consciously creating (and endlessly repeating) ones that are aligned with what you'd like to experience and who you'd like to become is a powerful way to change your life.

3

Decide to believe.

Commit to change, and conviction will follow. Some experts believe that in order to stick with a habit, we have to have faith in our ability to change. We humans decide to believe stuff all the time with little or no proof that it's possible or real: We decide to believe in a god; we decided to believe we could go to the moon. Belief is a muscle, and when you're changing a stubborn old habit and really stretching yourself, a hell-bent decision is the perfect personal trainer to get your belief in shape.



Write it down (in all caps).

Write down the habit you're going to work on in a notebook. Once you focus on and embody it, it'll become just a part of who you are, and nothing special. And then, because we're all creatures in a constant state of transformation, you'll shift your attention to some newer, fresher habit, and you'll have the confidence, know-how, and tools to make it yours as well.

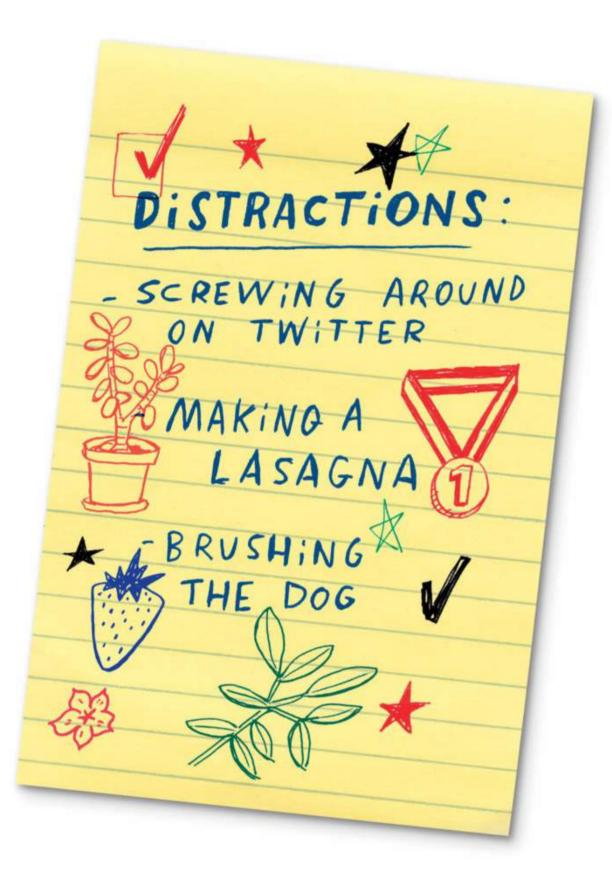
5

Mark each day that you show up.

You know what's immediately satisfying? Tracking your habits. While you may not see the actual results of the actions you take every day, you will see how many days you've stayed on course with the new habit, which is a huge accomplishment in itself. Each time you successfully participate in your habit—walk three miles, say not one snarky thing to your mother—mark that day on a calendar. Use something ceremonial, like a special pen or a gold star sticker. The simple task of acknowledging a job well done is very satisfying, and being able to look back over days and weeks and months of successfully doing what you promised yourself you'd do is even better.



0



6

Book it.

Put in place something that will hold you accountable for sticking with your habit. If you're learning piano, book a gig at a friend's party or a club or on Facebook Live. Throw yourself a big anniversary party to celebrate six months of not smoking—and send out the invites, put down the nonrefundable deposit on the band, and ask for the time off from work. Come up with some future sort of something and spend today booking it, buying it, and inviting all your friends to it, and let the deadline work its harrowing magic of holding you to your habit.

7

Develop new habits 20 minutes at a time.

Take a moment now to think about your habit and come up with a way to shrink it into a tiny, bite-size task. Adopting new habits can seem daunting, especially if you're shifting a way of being that you've been participating in for the majority of your life. This is why the practice of taking things one day at a time (for 20 minutes at a time) is so liberating: It removes the drama of "forever" from the equation and allows us to more softly put aside old ways. It also allows us to step back and practice imperfection, process, and patience by acknowledging that change takes time.

THE TRICK THAT MADE IT STICK

"My tactic is to wake up at the same time every day. Oversleeping makes me groggy, so by getting up within an hour of my goal time—even on weekends and days off—I'm more energized and focused on my to-do list and fitness goals."

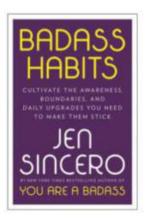
-LAUREN PHILLIPS, REAL SIMPLE DIGITAL EDITOR

"My friend and I tackled our decluttering goal as a team. We'd text each other photos of what we were donating or throwing out every day for an entire month. It was a total magic bullet of motivation."

-LAURA FENTON, REAL SIMPLE CONTRIBUTING HOME EDITOR

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

"When I'm trying to change the trajectory of my life, my motto is 'Just do one thing a day.' It gets the ball rolling, and then keeps it going, since those concrete little steps add up." —COURTENAY SMITH, REAL SIMPLE



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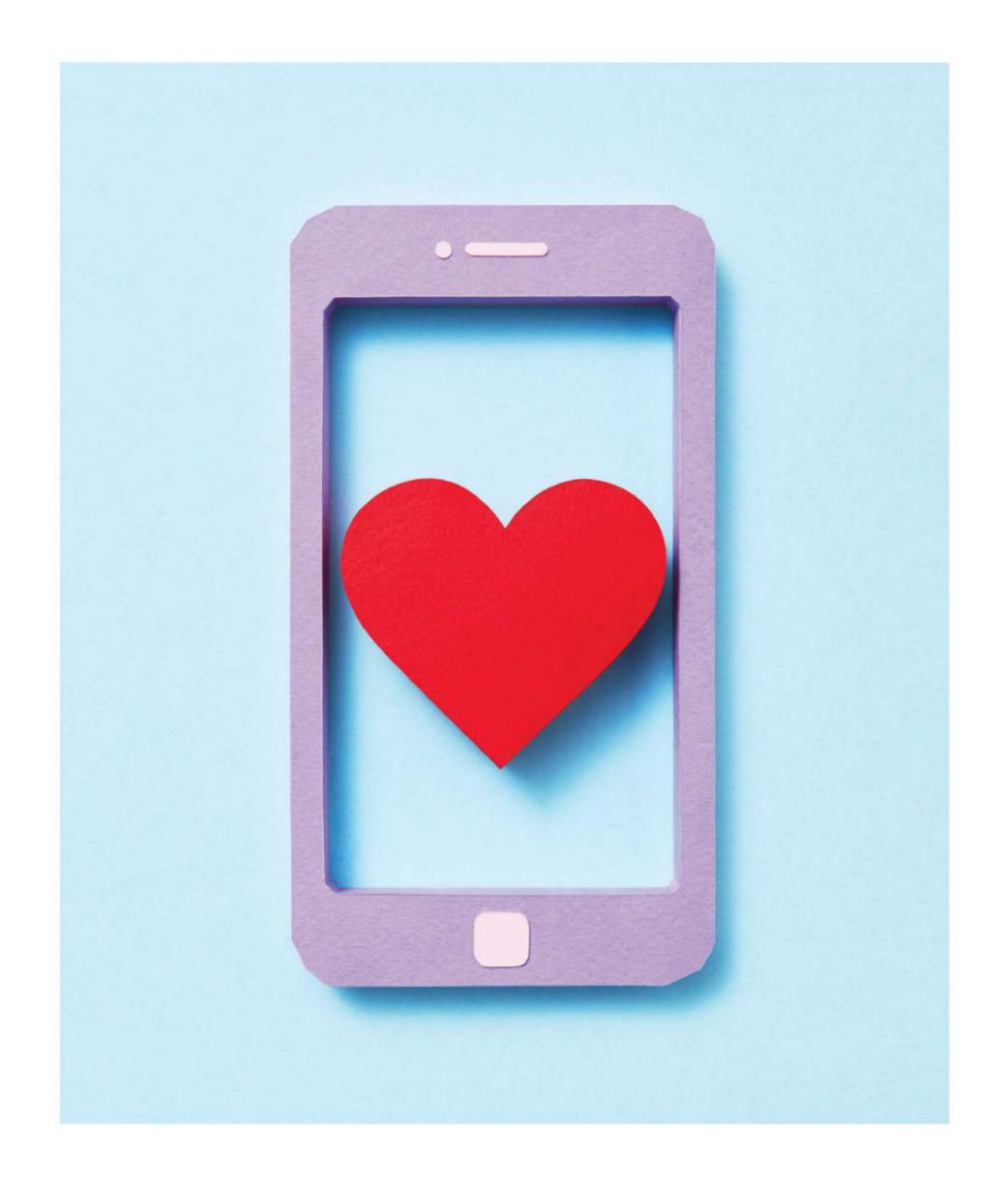
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Keep Older Loved Ones Safe and Happy

SEVEN LOW- AND HIGH-TECH WAYS TO FEEL CLOSER AND ENHANCE CAREGIVING, EVEN FROM A DISTANCE

By Kristen Kemp

when my mom's mind started to go, my caregiving journey began. She was diagnosed with Alzheimer's 10 years ago. My dad and I tried everything—gadgets, around-the-clock home health care—before making the difficult decision, two years ago, to put her in a nursing facility.

Now I also worry about my dad. After 50 years of marriage, he lives alone in their three-bedroom house with a huge yard. While his mind is sharp and he's independent, he is 78, has a serious heart condition, and gets tired and dizzy a lot. I live 700 miles away, and my only sibling lives 800 miles away, in the other direction. So we struggle to keep eyes and ears on him and make sure he's OK. Covid-19 has made me afraid to visit him, and the arrival of cold and flu season has only added to my anxiety.

Obviously, I'm not alone in this challenge: More than one in six American adults who work fullor part-time also help care for an elderly or disabled family member. Here are some suggestions to make caregiving easier for you and more empowering for your loved one—and to help everyone stay connected during a pandemic.

Follow them via GPS.

If you haven't heard from your loved one, your smartphone can show you exactly where they are. If you both use an iPhone, GPS is easy to set up: Search for the app called Find My (which is preinstalled), tap the People icon, then tap Share My Location or Start Sharing Location. The person you choose to share with gets a notification and can reveal their location as well. If one or more of you use an Android, you can share locations via Google Maps.

I'm able to see at a glance if my dad made it to his doctor's office or to Kroger, or if he's home (but possibly not picking up his cell). I sleep better knowing where he is. If your older relative doesn't have a smartphone, or has dementia and lives at home, see if they'll wear a GPS watch or necklace designed for seniors, such as the highly rated Medical Guardian Freedom Guardian (\$300 for watch, \$45 per month for service; medicalguardian.com).

Set up a group chat (or two or three).

Chandra Turner from Pelham, New York, and her sister in Florida rely on group messaging with their mom and dad, who live in Indiana. "My dad can't hear so well, and texting lets him digest things so he can be part of the conversation," Chandra says. Her kids participate in one group chat, for everyday talk and jokes. Chandra and her sister have another thread with just their parents, for topics like signing financial documents. Then there's the "delicate issues" text chain between the sisters only, for discussing their parents' health. "It keeps us in touch on a more regular basis than we have ever been," Chandra says. You can use standard text messaging or the free, popular app WhatsApp.



2

Call once a day.

I call my dad every night around 8 to make sure he feels OK. It's been a life-changing experience for us. It's not that we weren't close—we just kept in touch via my mother for my whole life. Since she's no longer our conduit, we know each other better. I've learned he watches shows about Alaska and animals at night and goes to lunch with friends most Fridays. He finds out when my kids do well on tests and what I did during my volunteer EMT shifts. It's small talk that adds up to a more meaningful relationship. You could switch off days with a sibling if daily calls seem daunting. But remember: The calls usually end up being quick—only so much happens in a day!—and they show landline-loving seniors you care.



Create a video library of their favorite memories.

The platform Megilla (\$36 per year; megilla.com) makes it easy and joyful to bond over your loved one's life story—even long-distance. Start by sending a question to their account; they'll get an email notification. They record their answer (up to three minutes long) via video, which gets saved to the site. You receive a notification to watch it, and you also have the option to download and share the video.

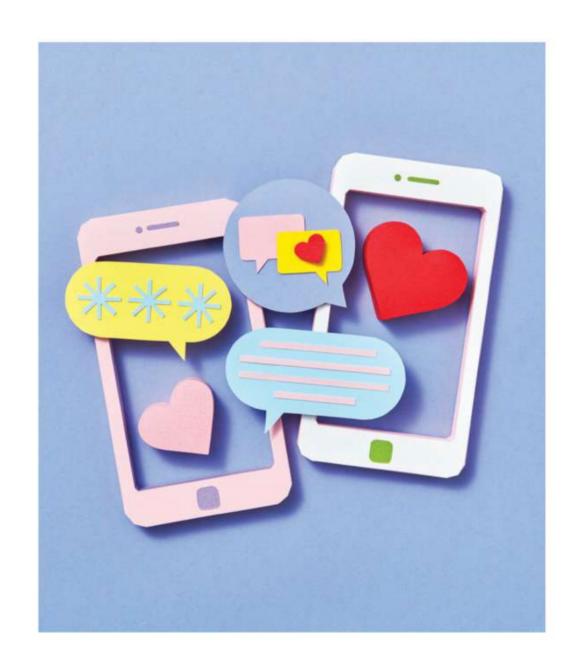
Jenna Helwig, Real Simple's food director, tried Megilla with her mom and dad. It took about 15 minutes to figure out, but her parents thought it was a wonderful way to create memories for their grandkids. Jenna's dad said, in one video, that he believes in everything in moderation, including moderation. "It was touching to hear him say he hoped he had instilled that idea in his kids," Jenna says.

My mom keeps a robot companion cat close by at all times, hugging it whenever she feels sad or anxious.

Plug in a voice-activated phone hub.

For aging parents with failing eyesight, operating a smartphone can be challenging. Soundmind (\$20 per month; soundmindinc.com) supplies a compact Alexa device, programmed with software for easy, voice-activated video calling. Once used only in eldercare facilities, Soundmind hubs are now available for older adults living at home. After you create an online account and provide contact and Wi-Fi info, the company sends a fully set-up device to your loved one—who can just plug it in and start using it. When your mom says, "Alexa, call my daughter," the device initiates a video call, which you receive via an app or Alexa device. You can also send text messages and photos.

Deborrah Wray in Cedarbluff, Mississippi, uses Soundmind to cheer up her 92-year-old mother, who lives 750 miles away. "I recently took her for a virtual walk around our farm," Deborrah says. "By the end, we were chuckling."



Try an upgraded caregiving hub.

Aloe Care Essentials (\$200 for device, \$30 per month for service; get.aloecare.com) is a voiceactivated speakerphone and motion detector that takes longdistance caregiving to the next level. No Wi-Fi is necessary—the hub uses its own 4G connection so tech-challenged elders just have to plug it in. (Caveat: If they live in a rural area with poor cell reception, Wi-Fi becomes a must.) Your loved one can call you or emergency services by pressing a button or saying a phrase. With the companion app, you can call at the touch of a button, leave check-in notes for friends and family (e.g., "Dad was in a good mood"), and receive motion alerts. Extra fall-detection motion sensors come with a premium plan (\$40 per month).

7

Get them a pet robot (no, seriously).

When my mom moved into assisted living, she didn't understand why Spud, her kitty, couldn't come with her. So a friend gave her a Joy for All Companion Pet Cat (\$110; joyforall.com). These robotic animals (cats, dogs, and kittens) have soft fur and can meow or bark and wiggle, so they seem real, especially to some people with Alzheimer's. My mom keeps the cat close by at all times, petting and hugging it whenever she feels sad or anxious. In 2022, a next-generation robot support animal real-looking, but with sensors that let you keep tabs on your loved onewill be available from the start-up company Tombot for \$449.





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balance



It Feels Good to Be Frugal

WHETHER BY NECESSITY OR CHOICE, MANY OF US ARE GETTING
BY ON LESS—AND DISCOVERING THAT BEING MORE INTENTIONAL
ABOUT SPENDING IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF SELF-CARE.

By Sharlene Breakey

Because of our frugal ethos, I've connected with friends and neighbors. We lend things to each other, pass down toys, and work together.

I WAS SCARED LAST MARCH, when we were all forced to grind to a halt. My freelance income dried up, and my husband and I found ourselves carefully meal planning to make ends meet. But now that work has returned (a privilege I'm grateful for every day), I'm still meal planning down to the last cilantro leaf. Not because I have to, but because I like it. I like that my grocery bill is half what it used to be. I like that I rarely throw food away anymore. I like the nightly walks we take along the river, bundled up in our coats, more than the once-a-week dinners out we used to manage. And I like the little nest egg piling up as we put out less.

The pressure to embrace frugality has been building: It takes more than \$230,000 to raise one child to age 18 (not including college), while wages have remained largely stagnant-and disproportionately low for many millennials trying to adult while burdened with student debt. Add the painful reality that participating in our disposable economy results in filling landfills and oceans with yesterday's fast fashion and plastic toys, causing a global existential threat. And then, the pandemic. This moment may become a circuit breaker, says Annie Raser-Rowland, coauthor of The Art of Frugal Hedonism: A Guide to Spending Less While Enjoying Everything More. "A lot of people who didn't lose income spent less-and found they could get by with far less shopping."

As long as we bring in enough to cover the bills, being frugal feels healthy, like we're taking care of ourselves. "Of course making money matters, but I'm suddenly seeing people realize they've been overvaluing possessions while undervaluing time with loved ones," says Paco de Leon, founder of the Hell Yeah Group, a financial firm in Los Angeles, and author and illustrator of the forthcoming book Finance for the People. "Or they realize they've been doing something unproductive just because it's delightful."

The question is: Will this attitude, this way of life, stick? Experts say it can—if we shift our mindset about spending, saving, and what really makes us feel good.

TELL YOURSELF: Saving isn't self-denial it's self-care.

That's what Erica, a single mom and filmmaker in New York City, discovered when she lost all her clients one brutal day last March. "I had almost no savings and no income, bills coming in, and two kids relying on me," she says. "At first it was embarrassing, but I dove in, watching every expense, figuring out how to get a forbearance on my mortgage, finding food that would stretch the farthest."

Unlike many people's, Erica's income is flowing again—but she hasn't forgotten her ordeal, or how strong it made her feel. "I'm proud of how we took care of ourselves, and I feel so much more in control now that I understand my finances better," she says. "We will never return to our pre-Covid lifestyle of living paycheck to paycheck, taking Uber everywhere and ordering takeout whenever we wanted. I now have the skills to build a buffer that will make our future much easier and less stressful."

TELL YOURSELF: Spendy doesn't equal special.

When Kristen, a lawyer in Minneapolis with two small kids, found her usual dining spots closed, she and her family went exploring instead. "We walked around a beautiful grassy area near some of our favorite restaurants," she says. "We loved it so much, we returned for an amazing family picnic, playing soccer, taking pictures, eating ice cream, and throwing rocks in the nearby lake. In pre-Covid times, we'd have just eaten lunch inside the restaurant and left."

Like Kristen, my husband and I always took for granted that you pay for experiences, particularly special ones—family outings, date nights,

birthdays. But we recently discovered that dining out doesn't compare to our at-home Taco Night, when we gather in the kitchen to make our own salsa and guacamole. The new tradition includes candles and a playlist curated by one of the kids. It's how we celebrated my college-age son's birthday last spring, because we had to. This spring, it will be the first thing we do to celebrate his return, because we can't wait to. The cash we'll save by staying in is a bonus, rather than the point.

TELL YOURSELF: Thoughtful spending connects you to your community.

Anna, who works in real estate for a large tech company outside San Francisco, used to buy almost everything her family needed from Amazon. "I'm short on time, it's easy, and it's cheaper," she rationalized. Then, during lockdown, while looking for crafts to keep her girls busy, she realized how much she missed the local stores down the block, and it hit her: Many of those shops might not survive. "It sunk in that I wanted those places around," Anna says. "So I found their websites and ordered from them, and I started shopping locally and from small-business websites as much as I could. Things might have cost slightly more, but it was a richer, more satisfying experience."

Dan Grady, PhD, a clinical psychologist in New York City, finds this topic coming up a lot in his conversations with patients. "The pandemic made it clear for the first time just how interconnected we are to that coffee shop or little card store we stop by."



It's one thing Elizabeth Willard Thames, creator of the financial independence and simple living blog Frugalwoods, loves most about the life she's built on a Vermont farm: "Because of our frugal ethos, I've made real connections with friends and neighbors. We lend things to each other, pass down toys and clothes, and work together when the community needs something. In the process of reusing and sharing, we reduce the amount of waste in landfills."

TELL YOURSELF: Spending feels fun—but the bills box you in.

As an attorney making six figures, Christine felt she could buy whatever caught her eye at Anthropologie. "It feels so good in the moment," she says. "I'd tell myself, 'I work so hard. I deserve this!" When she left her job to become a full-time writer, Christine realized she'd been working so hard in order to pay for the car, the house, the stuff—and she never had time to do what really mattered to her. She began researching minimalism,

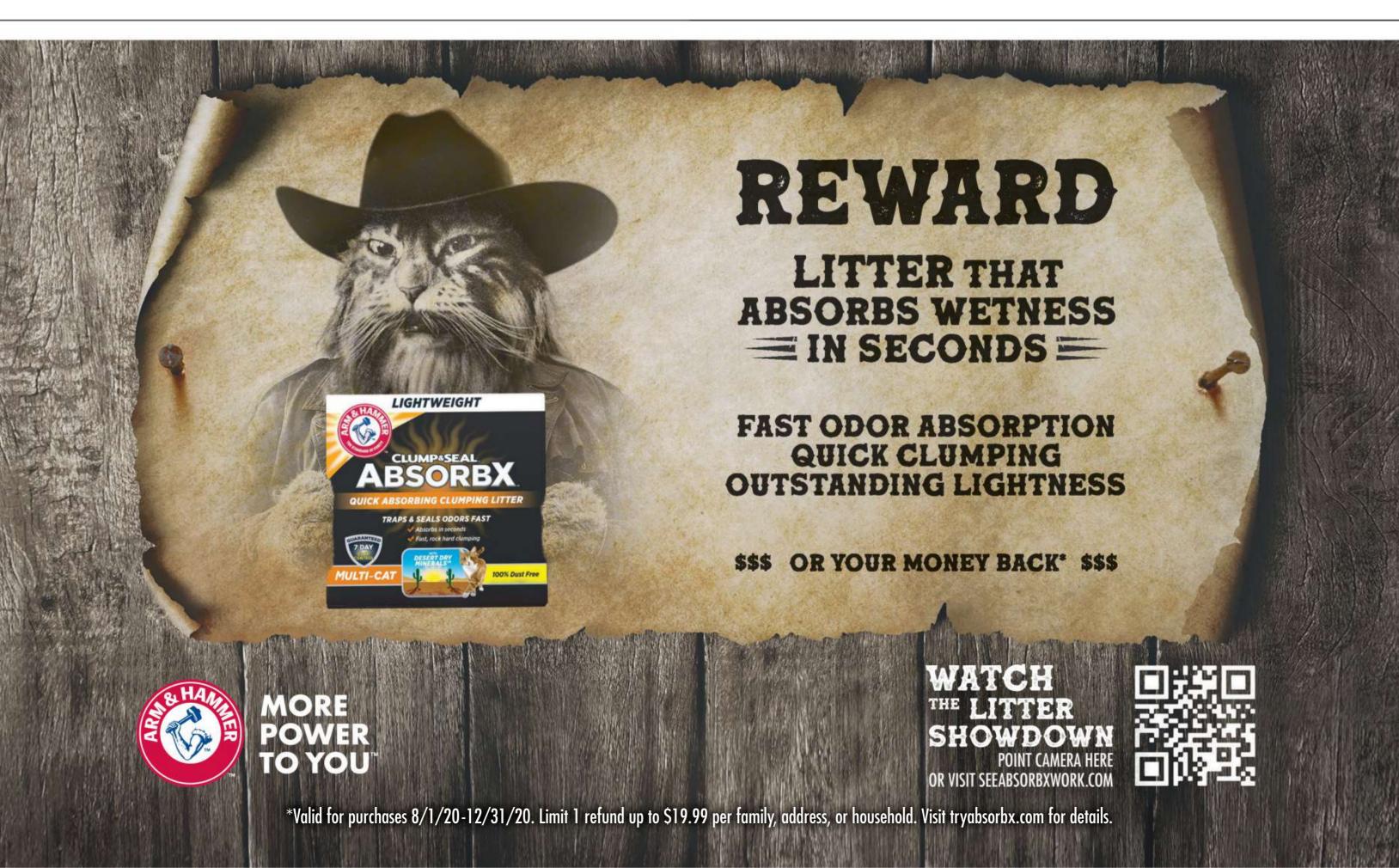
founded the blog *The Afrominimalist*, and moved from a big house to a small condo. "Now I am free—to create children's books, to help build a policy institute for antiracism, to be a mom," Christine says. (To learn more of her story, and to see her home, turn to page 84.)

TELL YOURSELF: Being cheap makes life rich.

I heard that maxim so often, it could be the official Pandemic 2020 anthem. Amanda in Fort Worth, Texas, whose family went down to one income just before the pandemic hit, says that instead of automatically heading to a pricey bar, she'll continue sipping date-night cocktails with her feet in the kiddie pool as her 4-year-old splashes around. Sheryl, a designer in Buenos Aires, formerly lived on take-out and never used her freezer for anything but gel packs. Now she loves making large pots of lentil stew, and she stocks the freezer with zip-top bags filled with it. "There is nothing more satisfying than knowing there's always something for dinner," she says.

And Allison, a photographer in New York City, says the near-daily bike rides she and her husband take serve as couples therapy and exercise in one.

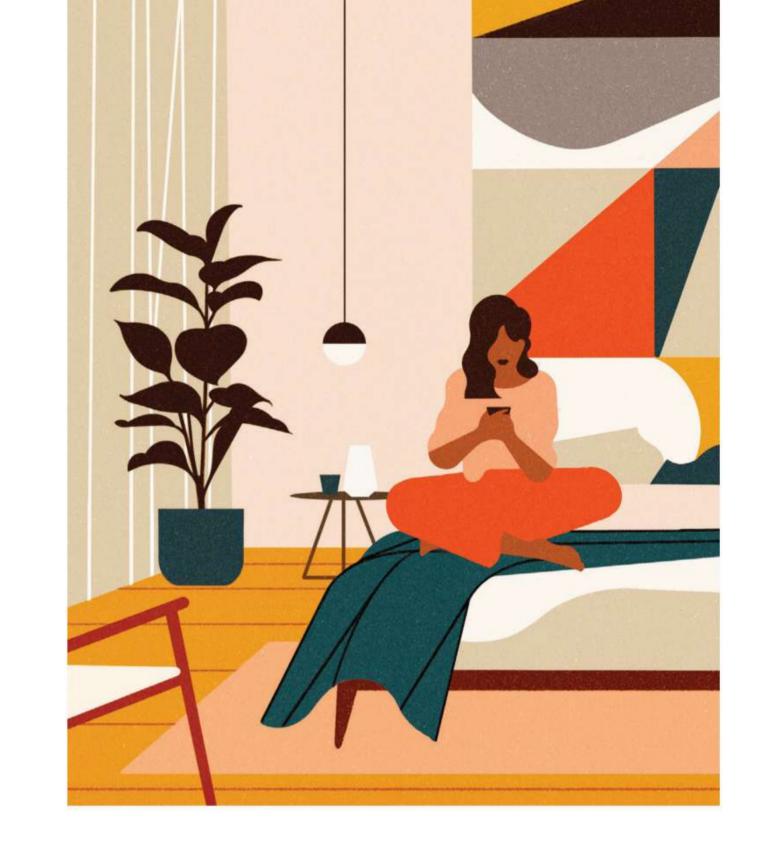
As for me, I'm going to keep cooking meals with my kids—and writing down all the other things that made us feel good while spending less. I don't want those ideas to slip away. As Annie Raser-Rowland puts it, "Whatever we do, I hope we don't lose the progress we've made toward understanding what being truly rich feels like."



Making It Work

What Change to Your Routine Has Saved You the Most Time?

By Kristine Gill



I set my computer's

default browser window to an empty page rather than a news or social media site. I don't have my personal email logged in on my office computer, and I avoid social media by keeping my phone's notifications off. At night, I enjoy scrolling through Instagram, but during the day it's just a distraction. Having these boundaries makes a big difference in my productivity.

Now that Covid-19

has canceled my performances for a while, I savor opportunities for human contact, though most are remote. To not lose sight of my goals, I start each morning by opening a score I want to conduct once things are more normal. That way, I feel good about being on the computer the rest of the day. The pandemic may have paused my work, but it can't stop me from asking myself who I am and what is important to me.

Food shopping used to be a big time suck for me, as a chef. One way I save time is by calling the meat or seafood department and ordering ahead. I don't waste time standing there while they cut, weigh, and wrap everything. And if I need a chicken spatchcocked or a fish filleted a certain way, I ask if they can do that too.

Before bed, I spend about five minutes making a list of work priorities for the next day. I block out time for the three big things I need to tackle so my schedule is planned. It helps me get to sleep, without my brain racing with thoughts of what I have to do the next morning. Sometimes I'll add the list to a task-managing app called Asana. It's collaborative, so I can share my schedule

I do the work that requires the most concentration at home, in the morning, before everyone else is awake. I'm not interrupted by meetings, phone calls, or just the day. I handle budgeting, marketing, curriculum development, and writing grants during this time, when I can focus. Then I switch to more social tasks, like logging on to meetings and getting up to speed with coworkers.



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PRINCIPAL AT GROUND
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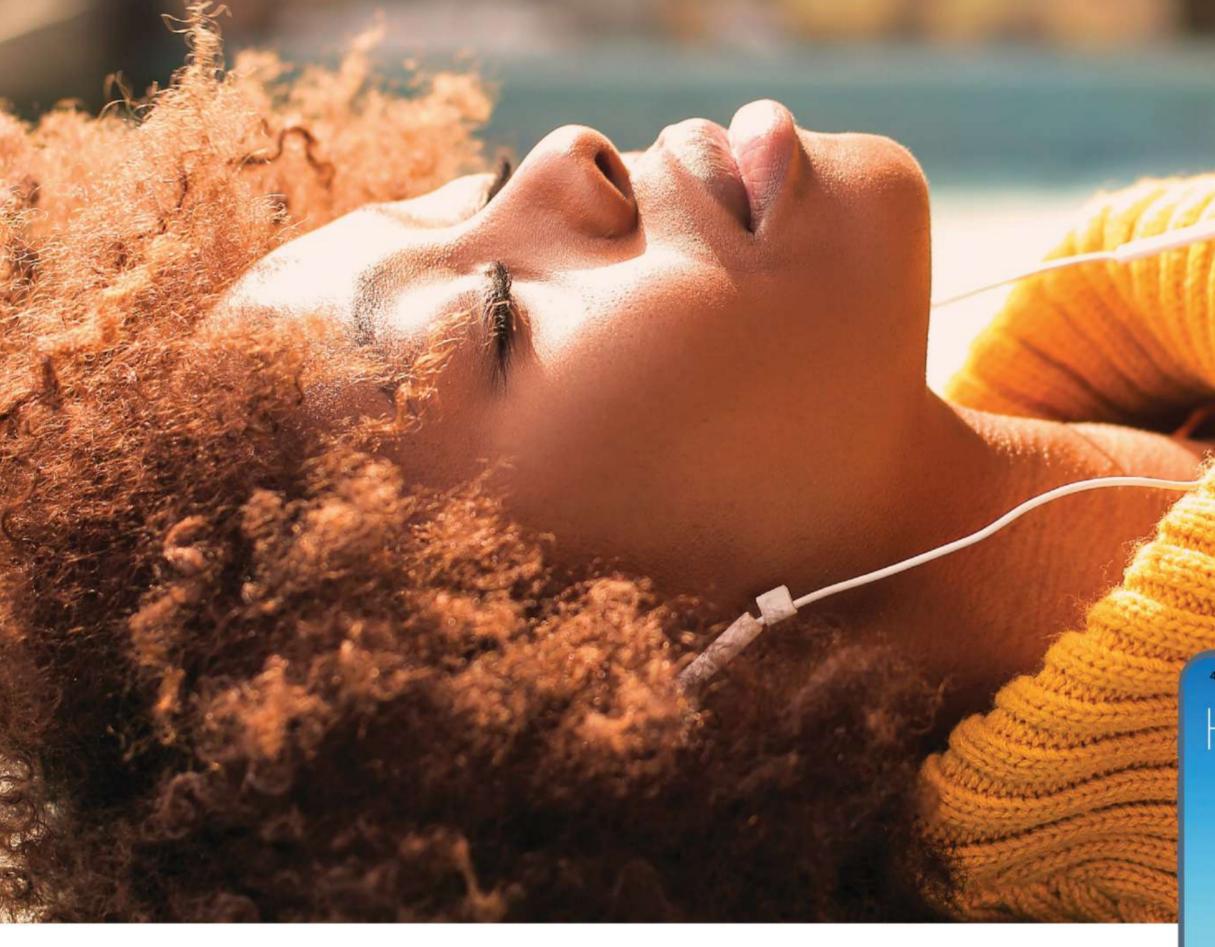


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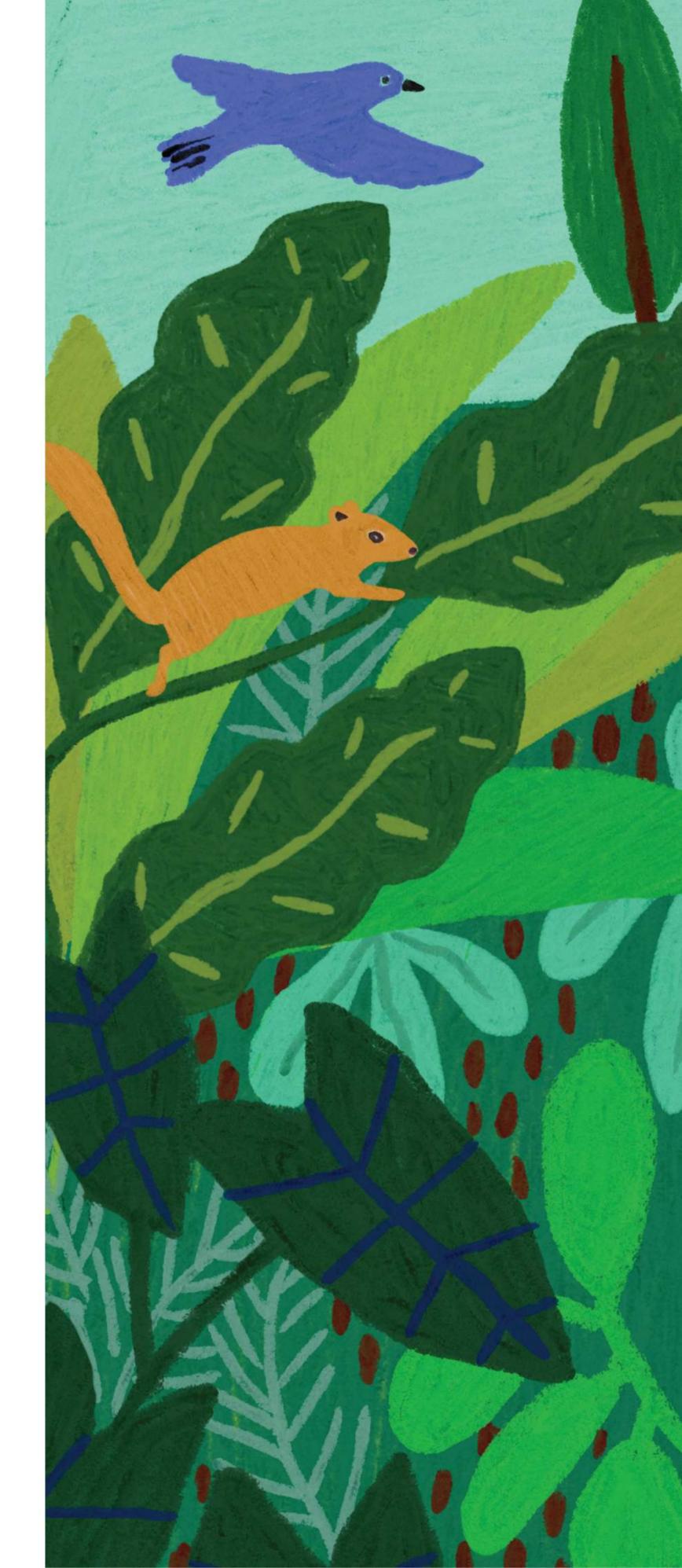
31 SELF-CARE RITUALS TO SET YOU UP FOR A **GREAT YEAR**

Ring in 2021 with a renewed commitment to your mind, body, and spirit. These real-world-tested tips relax, restore, and refresh.

BY JUDITH NEWMAN ILLUSTRATIONS BY ANNE BENTLEY

FOR MOST OF US, 2020 was a year of caution, retreat—and sacrifice. We've had to do a lot of caretaking to keep our loved ones and communities safe. Now, as we step gingerly into the new year, we need to tend to ourselves too. Self-care is not selfish—quite the contrary. You help those you love by being in the best condition possible.

Self-care doesn't need to be an earthquake in your life. Think of it more as a gentle breeze. Every act of self-kindness counts. Remind yourself to eat a leafy lunch and not pound back the caffeine. Clean out the junk drawer. Take a fiveminute walk before work. Set up a bird feeder outside your window to bring nature to you. Here are some more ideas to help you refocus on yourself in 2021.





HAVE A DAILY DATE WITH NATURE

Being outside for an hour a day can improve memory and executive function by 20 percent, according to several studies. Suzanne Bartlett-Hackenmiller, MD, a physician in Cedar Falls, lowa, and a certified forest therapy guide, gives her patients nature prescriptions: "I recommend patients spend as much time as possible outdoors, among trees and in parks where they can truly reap the mental, physical, and emotional benefits. My motto is 'Some is good, more is better."

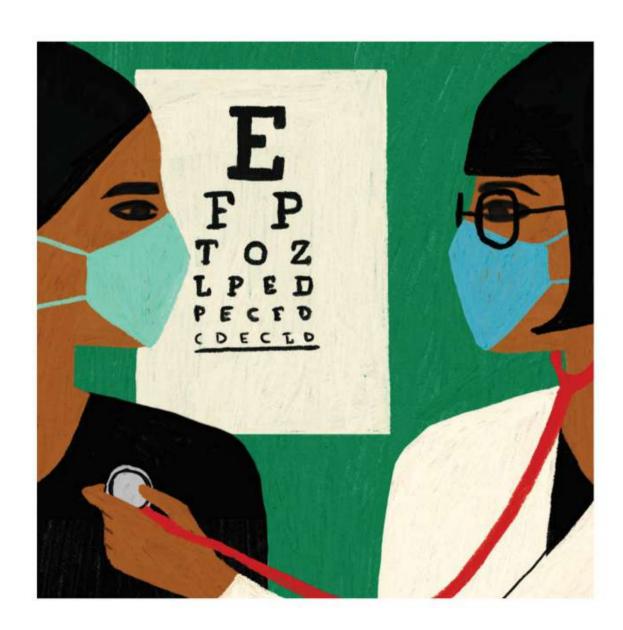


FIND A FIDGET

Rosary beads, used to count prayers and help free the mind, may be the original fidget gadget. I'm still a spinner girl, but my son concentrates best when his hands are busy with a Speks, a palm-size collection of magnet balls he can shape and reshape. Preliminary research has shown that fidget tools can induce a kind of mini meditation, creating a brief zen state that may increase attention span.

LOSE THE BOOZE (FOR A MONTH)

The idea of Dry January has become so popular that there's a new book, The Dry Challenge, dedicated to showing people how to do it. "My kickoff ritual is putting down my glass of champagne as soon as the ball drops on New Year's Eve, while everyone-including meapplauds," author Hilary Sheinbaum says. "From 12 a.m. onward, I drink seltzer or fruit juice on ice." Throughout January, she replaces her after-work glass of red wine with hot spiced tea or nonalcoholic prosecco (the brand Gruvi is a fave). If she's out with friends, she drinks a simple mocktail: seltzer and a dash of pineapple juice.



CONNECT WITH ALL YOUR DOCS

About a fifth of Americans have put off some necessary medical care in part due to fear of Covid-19, says a poll conducted by National Public Radio and Harvard's T.H. Chan School of Public Health. Are you one of them? Now's the time to get all those medical appointments you postponed on your calendar. (If your job offers paid sick days, check whether they can be used for appointments.) See if you can get them all lined up over the course of one Wellness Week. Book your internist for your physical, your dentist for a cleaning, your eye doc for a prescription check and consult about that dry eye, etc. No, your gyno visit can never be compared to a spa day. But getting these appointments in your rearview mirror will help you breathe a little easier.



REMEMBER A TIME THAT WAS NOT THIS TIME

"I love watching TV featuring feisty women who were in their prime before the advent of cellphones, the internet, and Covid," says Brenda Copeland, a publishing executive in New York City, who kicks back with episodes of Murder She Wrote, The Golden Girls, and Designing Women. "Bonus points if they wear shoulder pads." I thought I was immune to nostalgia—until a friend sent me a new party trivia game called Boom Again, for people who lived through the 1950s, '60s, and '70s. Now I'm thinking about my collection of mood rings and the heady smell of mimeograph paper. What time period do you most like to imagine yourself inhabiting? Find the book, TV, song, or movie, and dive in.

STRESSED? TRY THIS **AFFIRMATION**

"You can do anything for one minute." Scott Neumyer, host of Anxiety Diaries Podcast, uses that mantra when he feels his self-doubt getting out of hand. "It's a way for me to ground myself and remember to take things in small chunks. One minute. Sixty seconds. That's all. Then you rinse and repeat. That usually keeps me going."



ENJOY AN EASY CLOSET UPGRADE

Indulge in this favorite pleasure from professional organizer Lisa Zaslow, founder of Gotham Organizers in New York City: Get rid of all the ugly clothes hangers-like those wire ones you still use from the dry cleaner-and "treat yourself to matching ones," she says. This practical investment will make you happier when you open your closet, even if you don't do any additional organizing. Though when you're swapping out hangers, you may be inspired to let a few things go.

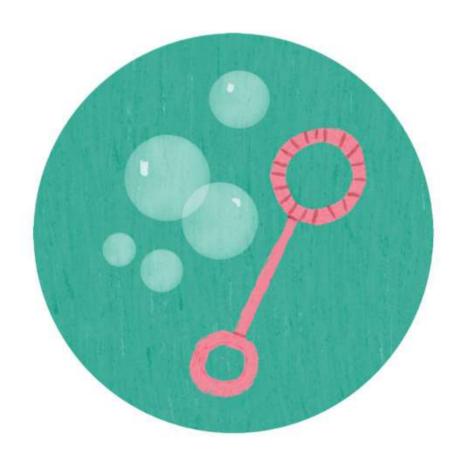


VOLUNTEER

Kaye Teasley of Richmond, Virginia, uses her time in the car to help others. "I make baggies of essential items—hand sanitizer, masks, sunscreen, tampons, granola bars—and give them to homeless people at stoplights." Caring for others is self-care, says psychiatrist Kelli Harding, MD, author of The Rabbit Effect. "Spending an hour a month helping others boosts mood and well-being for everyone involved, and the volunteer lives longer too."

SING-TO AN AUDIENCE OF ONE

You're a natural performer?
Great. Most people aren't.
A lot of us, though, find joy in singing, even to ourselves.
"I have a karaoke machine hooked up to my big flat-screen TV," says Robin Fried, a talent agent in New York City. "I sing to my dog, Lola, as she sits on the couch. I think she particularly likes 'The Very Thought of You."



BLOW BUBBLES

David L. Williams, a writer and retired police officer in Albuquerque, New Mexico, discovered the soothing effect of blowing bubbles by accident. "One night, I was working in a Crimes Against Children unit. I'd just gotten a confession from a monster, and I walked outside so I wouldn't strangle him. I found a bottle of bubbles from my kid's birthday party in my jacket. I blew a few on a whim, and felt better after a few minutes. I went back in, did the paperwork, and sent him on his way to a quadruple life sentence."

He still keeps a bottle handy.

STREAM A LITTLE ANIMAL CALM

The YouTube channel Explore.org is dedicated to live cams of wildlife, so you can spy on gorillas lounging in the forest and sharks swimming the Atlantic, all from the comfort of your computer screen. Many of the cams at farms or animal sanctuaries are like daytime soap operas, only the main characters are sheep or baby giraffes. Hilda Mitrani of Hollywood, Florida, is partial to the @M_Crouton Twitter feed, which chronicles animals at SquirrelWood Equine Sanctuary in Montgomery, New York. "When I want to de-stress, I check out what Crouton and his friends are up to." Animals take time to show up, so you may stare at nothing sometimes, which is soothing too.



SAY THE QUIET PARTS OUT LOUD

We have so much going on in our heads that we need to let it out. Voicing these ideas in the moment can relieve anxiety, therapists say, because we are slowing down the thought processes. Betsy Gleick of Westchester, New York, says she "now talks to everything—my sourdough starter, the rabbit in our driveway, the things I have planted—and ignore the mocking laughs of my family. So clearly this is some sort of therapy for me."

BANG A GONG, GET IT ON

Some Instagrammers offer sound healing to put you in a state of deep relaxation. Roxie Sarhangi (@roxiesoundhealing) holds monthly sessions to celebrate the moon, with sounds attuned to the seven chakras. My chakras are skeptical, but the sounds put me to sleep.

FIND THE SILLY IN THE SERIOUS

Psychologists say being playful can put us in the here and now and stop us from ruminating over things we can't control. That's why my motto for 2021 is "Everything is better with googly eyes." I just sneaked into my friend's house and placed them strategically on all her plants. I'm pretty sure she'll thank me...eventually.

S-T-R-E-T-C-H

Do shoulder retraction exercises that correct poor posture by opening up the chest, suggests Samantha Clayton, a Los Angelesbased fitness consultant, former Olympian, and mother of four (including triplets). "Do five sets of 10-second holds where you sit up tall, place your hands behind your head, lift your chest, and pull your shoulder blades together." After any exercise regimen, "treat yourself to a muscle-releasing selfmassage using a foam roller or tennis ball," she adds. Loose muscles tend to hurt less and keep you coming back for more.



FLOAT

The simple act of floating in water relieves pain and stress, research suggests. Music students who floated for one hour a week even boosted performance skills. Whether you splay out in a sensory deprivation tank (start with 60 to 90 minutes), the Dead Sea (the salt makes you extra buoyant), or your candlelined, sea-salt-doused bathtub at home, you're creating a little mental oasis for yourself.

CURATE YOUR FRIENDS

The friends we surround ourselves with are our lifeblood. I know someone who methodically went through her list of Facebook friends and axed everyone who repeatedly annoyed her with their comments. "I cut out a few IRL friends too the drama queens, the judgy Judys, the humblebraggers," she told me. "After a lifetime of collecting people, inevitably you end up with a few who make you say, 'Wait, why are we friends again?""



STOP TRYING TO BE BETTER...JUST STOP

Writer Karen Karbo says the title of her own book, Yeah, No. Not Happening, out loud when she needs to get herself off the hamster wheel of being the best. She started prioritizing self-kindness over self-improvement when a new morning routine-meditating, reading, journaling, exercising, and doing affirmations—brought more stress than happiness. "Women in particular spend most of their lives setting themselves up for failure by always trying to improve themselves, when most of the time we're fine the way we are. We need to give ourselves a break. That's self-care."



WEED OUT YOUR **ANNOYANCES**

"Each month, I choose a different unwelcome plant on our property-garlic mustard, poison ivy, ailanthus—arm myself with the necessary weapons, and go on a gleeful murder spree," notes Sara Kay of Woodstock, New York. "I find the concreteness of this project very satisfying."

INDULGE IN A FANCY SALAD OF THE DAY

If healthy eating is on your agenda, start with lunch. Courtenay Smith, a writer in New York City, treats herself to a mobile lunchtime order at an upscale neighborhood salad shop, and she walks seven minutes to pick it up. "It has made such a difference in my body and energy level to take a midday break and eat a huge bowl of greens once a day," she says. "I can order it with superfoods, like kale, beets, and sweet potato, and it tastes so much better than what I'd make myself."

WHO'S A GOOD BOY?

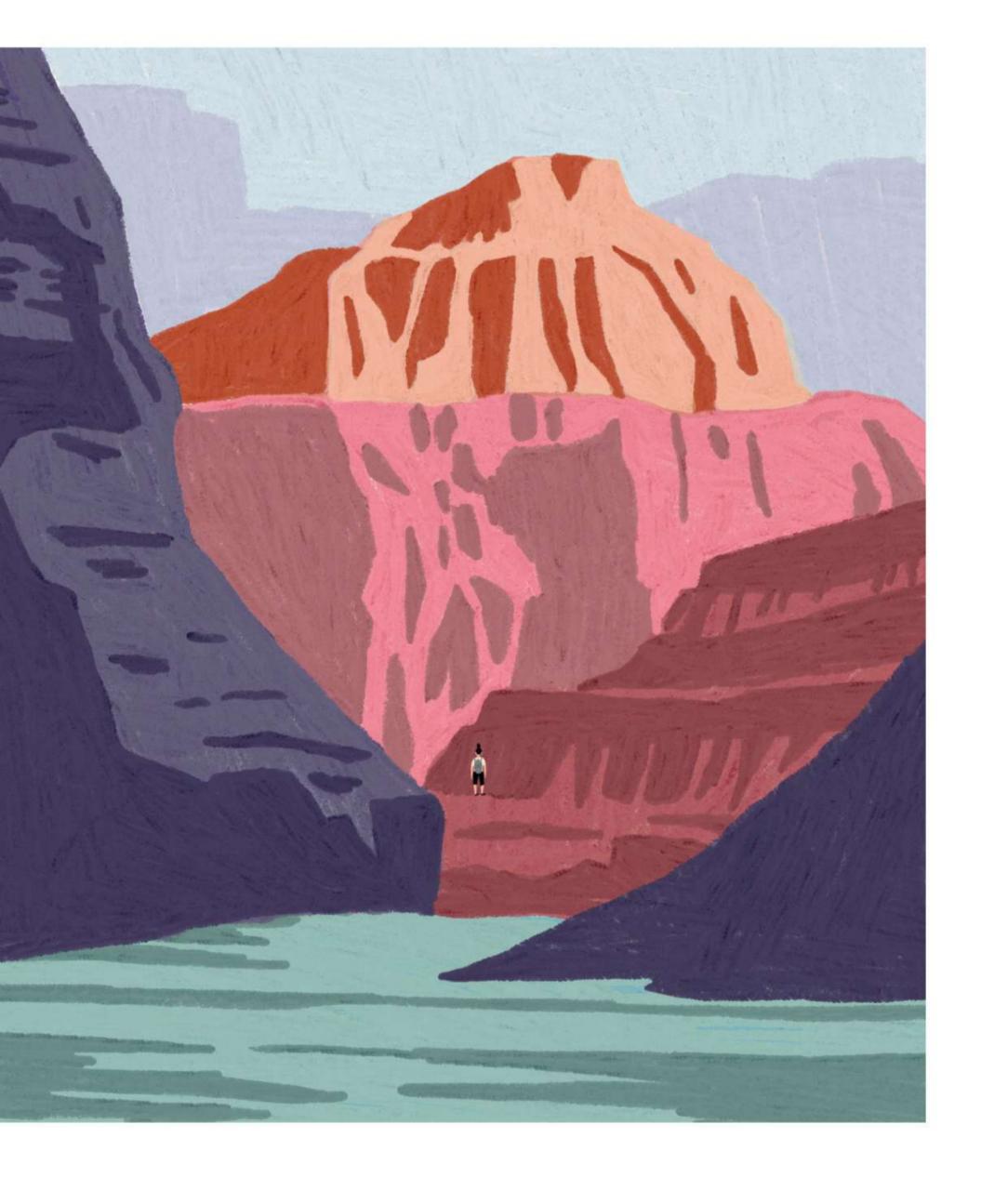
Your new pup, that's who. "Sometimes the best way to care for yourself is to care for another creature," notes Steven Gundry, MD, a cardiologist at the Center for Restorative Medicine and International Heart & Lung Institute in California. Numerous studies show that having a dog can reduce stress and more or less force couch potatoes outdoors. Too much of a commitment? Dip a paw in by fostering, volunteering at a shelter, or offering to walk the neighbor's dog.



RECONNECT WITH YOUR SENSE OF AWE

For the faithful, that may mean spending more time in a church, synagogue, or mosque. For the secular, it may mean gazing upon the Grand Canyon or a sunset at the local beach. Do something that makes you feel small yet connected to other people and civilizations.

One of my friends watches space launches—live or on YouTube.





DO A CREATIVE FRIDGE CLEAN-OUT

Admittedly, this doesn't give everyone joy. But for those who hate to waste, there's something deeply fulfilling about using up every aboutto-expire ingredient in the house. See what you can come up with. I just made the tastiest roast vegetables with—well, I'm not sure. Whatever was there. Good catchall dishes include stir-fries, quiches, and breads made with overripe fruits and vegetables (bananas, zucchini). My theory is this: Anything that's thrown into an Instant Pot can't kill you.

FEEL YOUNG AT HEART

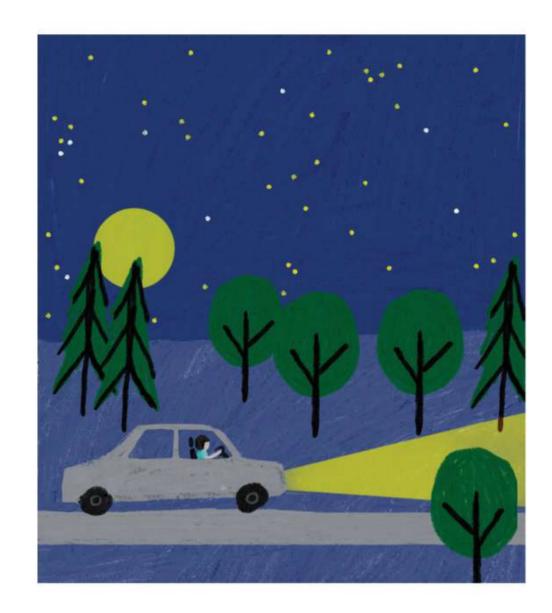
"I like to sit in my underwear in an inflatable pool
while eating a Popsicle,"
says Alexandra Robbins of
Washington, D.C. This
doesn't exactly scream
"Be your best self," but
there is something about
regressing a little that is
excellent for the spirit,
Robbins says.

FEEL YOUNG IN BODY

When Karen Bouris, an environmental activist in Inverness, California, wants to wake herself up from a computerand-news stupor, she climbs to the top of a very steep hill, relaxes her body, and runs down, being careful not to turn an ankle. "I'm flying, gravity is my friend, and I feel strong and free," she says. "For a minute I can put aside the suffering of this world and feel its beauty and possibility."

GO DOWN AN (INSPIRING) INTERNET RABBIT HOLE

Indulging your curiosity about weird stuff can be a marvelous distraction from the everyday. "I pick something I know almost nothing about and go on YouTube or Facebook to learn more," says Nancy Collins, a print and TV journalist. "Last week I did the history of Ireland, most challenging airport runways, cameo jewelry, **Uighurs in China, Apollo space** missions, and the best way to cook cabbage." However, there are good subjects and bad subjects. Good subject: breeds of hamster. Bad subject: what your dry cough could mean. In other words, don't create more worry for yourself with a visit to Dr. Google.



SELF-CARE MADE REAL SIMPLE

Staffers share their go-to spirit savers.

Weekly Self-Reflection

I take my Sundays very seriously. I prepare for the week ahead by turning inward. I turn off my phone and TV, and I turn down any social invitations. I spend the day solo while cooking, reading, writing, and goal setting to my heart's content, without any outside noise or distractions.

-RACHEL SYLVESTER, SENIOR EDITOR

Silent Strides

I take a walk, usually for an hour, by myself at the end of my workday. That respite from my house—which contains four remote-learning kids and all my responsibilities—is everything to me. I may listen to podcasts, catch up on phone calls with friends and family, or put my earbuds in and listen to nothing. Just silence. I have yet to return from a walk in a bad mood.

-MAYA KUKES, CONTRIBUTING SENIOR **RESEARCH EDITOR**

Solo Night Drive

After it gets dark, I take a very slow drive around the backstreets of my town, wandering aimlessly, radio off, just thinking and driving and breathing.

-LIZ VACCARIELLO, EDITOR IN CHIEF

Cardio Dance for Klutzes

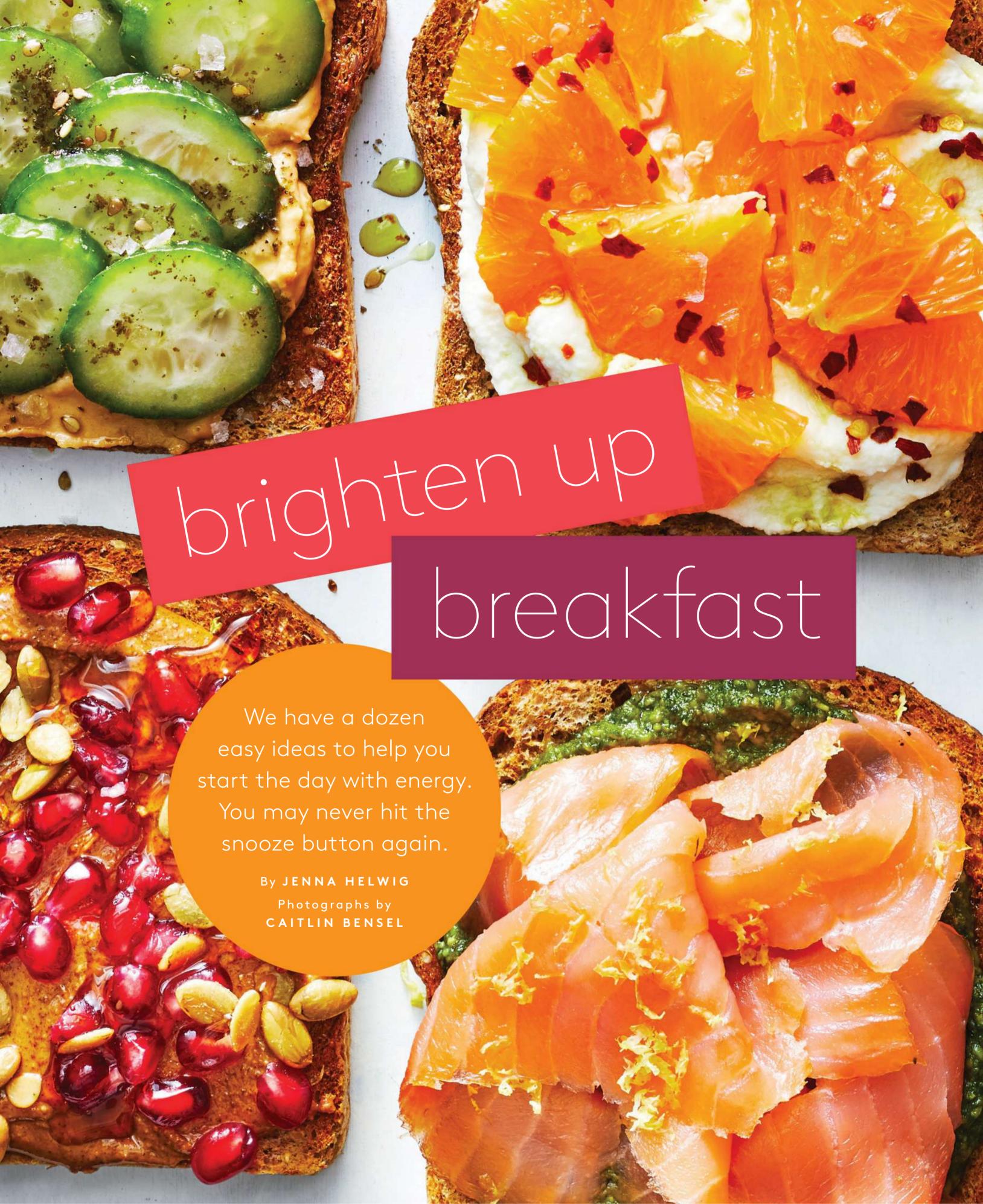
I absolutely love to dance as a workout. But I'm pretty awkward, so in-person classes stress me out. During the pandemic, I discovered Obé Fitness, which offers live and on-demand classes for \$27 a month. I found a cardio-dance instructor I love, and now I treat myself to a 30-minute class most days of the week. It's my private time to unwind, and it's so fun. I'm getting more fit and burning stress. And it doesn't matter if my moves don't exactly look like a pro's. -HEATHER MORGAN SHOTT, SENIOR DIRECTOR OF DIGITAL **CONTENT STRATEGY**

A Faux Commute

I miss my morning and evening commutes to transition between work mode and home-and-mom mode. In the morning, I have my coffee outside, then I spend a few minutes either sitting on the stoop or filling the bird feeder in the backyard. After I log off, I make my two boys dinner and then go outside, sometimes with a glass of wine, and spend a few minutes in relative silence.

-EMILY KEHE, CREATIVE DIRECTOR











Pink Dragon Smoothie

ACTIVE TIME 5 MINUTES
TOTAL TIME 5 MINUTES
SERVES 2

1½ cups unsweetened soy milk

- 1/2 cup plain whole-milk Greek yogurt
- 1 small (2 oz.) refrigerated cooked beet (such as Love Beets or Melissa's), quartered (about 1/4 cup)
- 1 cup frozen raspberries
- 1 3½-oz. pkg. frozen dragon fruit puree (pitaya) Pinch of kosher salt
- 2 tsp. agave nectar or honey (optional)

COMBINE all ingredients in a blender, starting with soy milk and yogurt. Process until smooth, about 1 minute.

Mango-Turmeric Smoothie

ACTIVE TIME 5 MINUTES
TOTAL TIME 5 MINUTES
SERVES 2

- 1 cup plain kefir
- 3/4 cup bottled coconut water or tap water
- 1½ cups frozen mango chunks (from a 12-oz. pkg.)
 - 1 cup frozen, very ripe banana slices (from 1 banana)
- 1/4 tsp. ground turmeric Pinch of freshly ground black pepper Pinch of kosher salt

COMBINE all ingredients in a blender, starting with kefir and coconut water. Process until smooth, about 1 minute.

Good Morning Green Smoothie

ACTIVETIME 5 MINUTES
TOTAL TIME 5 MINUTES
SERVES 2

- 1 cup unsweetened hemp milk or soy milk
- 1 cup fresh baby spinach
- 1 Persian (mini) cucumber, roughly chopped (1 cup)
- 1 cup roughly chopped Granny Smith apple (from 1 apple)
- 1½ cups frozen pineapple chunks
 - 2 Tbsp. hemp seeds Pinch of kosher salt
 - 1 tsp. agave nectar or syrup (optional)

COMBINE all ingredients in a blender, starting with hemp milk. Process until smooth, about 1 minute.

SMARTER SMOOTHIES

These recipes are nourishing, low in added sugar, and—most importantly—delicious. Katie Morford, RD, author of the breakfast cookbook *Rise & Shine*, explains the ideal formula.

START UNSWEETENED Choose a plain or low-sugar liquid base, like nondairy milk, dairy milk, or water. Skip juice or highly sweetened plant milks.

PACK IN PROTEIN This could be the liquid (such as cow's milk or soy milk), yogurt, kefir, silken tofu, or a nut butter.

FOLD IN FAT AND FIBER These two nutrients help keep you full and your blood sugar steady. For fiber, opt for a fruit like raspberries, which have a hefty 8 grams per cup. For healthy fats, slip in some avocado or nut and seed butters, or use whole-milk yogurt instead of nonfat.

VEGGIE IT UP Morford suggests baby spinach, a few leaves of kale, cucumber, or cauliflower florets: "These all blend well into smoothies without making them taste like a patch of grass."

ADD SUPERFOODS Sprinkle in anti-inflammatory turmeric, omega-3-rich hemp seeds, or even a spoonful of cocoa powder. "Adding 100 percent cocoa powder to your smoothie means a dose of flavonols, a plant chemical with powerful antioxidant properties," Morford says.

Supercharge your blend with the dietitian-recommended anti-inflammatory ingredients at realsimple.com/smoothies.

Coffee-Tahini

ACTIVE TIME 5 MINUTES

TOTAL TIME 5 MINUTES

1/2 cup strong brewed

1½ cups frozen, very ripe

banana slices (from

about 1½ bananas)

1 Tbsp. unsweetened

¹/₈ tsp. ground cinnamon

Pinch of kosher salt

1 tsp. pure maple syrup

COMBINE all ingredients in

a blender, starting with oat

smooth, about 1 minute.

milk and coffee. Process until

cocoa powder

(optional)

coffee, chilled

1 cup oat milk

2 Tbsp. tahini

¹/₂ ripe avocado

Smoothie

SERVES 2



Fried Rice Scramble

ACTIVE TIME 10 MINUTES
TOTAL TIME 10 MINUTES
SERVES 2

- 4 large eggs
- 1/4 tsp. kosher salt
- 1 Tbsp. toasted sesame oil
- ²/₃ cup leftover cooked brown rice, chilled
- 1 cup shredded coleslaw mix (from an 8-oz. pkg.)
- 2 tsp. soy sauce
 Toasted sesame seeds,
 for serving
 Sriracha or sambal oelek,
 for serving (optional)

WHISK eggs and salt in a small bowl.

HEAT oil in a 10-inch nonstick skillet over medium. Add rice and cook, stirring often, until beginning to crisp, 1 to 2 minutes. Add coleslaw mix and soy sauce; cook, stirring occasionally, for 2 minutes. Add eggs and scramble.

DIVIDE between 2 plates and sprinkle with sesame seeds. Serve with hot sauce, if desired.

Corn and Pepper Scramble

ACTIVE TIME 10 MINUTES
TOTAL TIME 10 MINUTES
SERVES 2

- 4 large eggs
- 1/4 tsp. kosher salt
- 1 Tbsp. olive oil
- 1 cup frozen or fresh corn kernels
- 1/3 cup chopped, jarred roasted red peppers (about 2 oz.)
 Fresh cilantro leaves and crumbled queso fresco, for serving

WHISK eggs and salt in a small bowl.

HEAT oil in a 10-inch nonstick skillet over medium. Add corn and cook, stirring often, until slightly browned, 4 to 5 minutes. Add peppers and cook, stirring constantly, until warmed through, about 1 minute. Add eggs and scramble.

DIVIDE between 2 plates. Top with cilantro and queso fresco.

Grains and Greens Scramble

ACTIVE TIME 10 MINUTES
TOTAL TIME 10 MINUTES
SERVES 2

- 4 large eggs
- 1/2 tsp. kosher salt, divided
- 1 Tbsp. olive oil
- ²/₃ cup cooked farro
- 1 cup sliced lacinato kale Chopped Calabrian chiles or crushed red pepper, for serving (optional)

WHISK eggs and 1/4 teaspoon salt in a small bowl.

skillet over medium. Add farro and cook, stirring often, until beginning to crisp a bit, 1 to 2 minutes. Add kale and remaining 1/4 teaspoon salt; cook, stirring occasionally, until tender, about 2 minutes. Add eggs and scramble.

DIVIDE between 2 plates. Top with chopped chiles, if desired.

Bacon, Avocado, and Tomato Scramble

ACTIVE TIME 15 MINUTES
TOTAL TIME 15 MINUTES
SERVES 2

- 2 slices bacon
- 1/4 cup sliced red onion
 (from 1 onion)
- 1 cup cherry or grape tomatoes, halved
- 4 large eggs
- 1/4 tsp. kosher salt
- 1/2 ripe avocado, sliced

cook bacon in a 10-inch nonstick skillet over medium, flipping once, until crispy, about 3 minutes per side. Transfer to a plate lined with paper towels, reserving drippings in skillet.

cook onion in reserved drippings over medium, stirring often, for 1 minute. Add tomatoes and cook, stirring occasionally, until tomatoes are softened and bursting, about 5 minutes.

WHISK eggs and salt in a small bowl. Add eggs to skillet and scramble. Divide between 2 plates. Crumble bacon over eggs. Serve with sliced avocado.

EXCEPTIONAL EGGS

Eggs might just be the perfect breakfast food, according to Lauren Slayton, RD, founder of the nutrition consultancy Foodtrainers and host of its podcast. Here's why.

NO MORE MIDMORNING HUNGER PANGS Two large eggs contain 12 grams of protein, about a quarter of your daily needs. "Calorie for calorie, nothing keeps you satiated longer than eggs," Slayton says.

YOU'LL BE SHARPER Eggs are also an excellent source of the nutrient choline, which helps with brain function, including memory. That choline (and lots of flavor!) is in the yolk, so eat the whole egg.

ANY COLOR WILL DO Shell color is unrelated to nutrition or flavor. Hens with red earlobes tend to lay brown eggs; hens with white earlobes usually lay white eggs.

THEY LAST AND LAST Well-refrigerated eggs are safe 2 to 3 weeks past their expiration date, according to the American Egg Board.







TOAST TO WELLNESS

Shake up your morning slice with these tips from Tamar Samuels, RD, a health coach and dietitian based in New York City.

GO WITH THE GRAIN Choose whole-grain bread for a boost of fiber and nutrients. Remember that "multigrain" doesn't always mean whole-grain, just that more than one (often refined) grain was used. On the nutrition panel, check for at least 3 grams of fiber per slice.

EVEN BETTER, LOOK FOR "SPROUTED"

Samuels likes Food for Life Ezekiel 4:9

Sprouted Grain Bread: "It's made with a mix of grains and legumes and has 3 grams of fiber and 5 grams of protein in every slice."

Find it in the freezer section, and stash it in your own freezer to make it last. Drop frozen slices right into the toaster.

THINK BEYOND BUTTER AND JAM

Yup, we're about to mention protein again. "Having protein in the morning is a great way to regulate your appetite throughout the day," Samuels says. So top your toast with a protein-rich ingredient, like the nut butter, ricotta cheese, hummus, and smoked salmon in our recipes.

nutrition and flavor, we piled even more good stuff onto our toasts, including magnesium-rich pumpkin seeds, fiber-filled pomegranate arils, potassium-packed oranges, and hydrating cucumber.



Ricotta-Orange Toast

ACTIVETIME 5 MINUTES
TOTAL TIME 5 MINUTES
SERVES 2

- 1 navel orange
- 2 Tbsp. ricotta cheese
- 2 slices whole-grain bread, toasted
- 1 tsp. olive oil
 Flaky sea salt, for serving
 Crushed red pepper,
 for serving (optional)

CUT off top and bottom of orange. Standing orange on a flat end, cut down and around to remove rind and white pith. Cut orange into ½-inch wheels. Cut each wheel into quarters.

on each piece of toast. Top with orange pieces. Drizzle with oil. Sprinkle with flaky sea salt and, if desired, crushed red pepper.

Smoked Salmon Toast

ACTIVETIME 5 MINUTES
TOTAL TIME 5 MINUTES
SERVES 2

- 2 Tbsp. basil pesto
- 2 slices whole-grain bread, toasted
- 2 oz. sliced smoked salmon
- 2 tsp. lemon zest (from 1 lemon)

SPREAD 1 tablespoon pesto on each piece of toast. Top evenly with salmon. Sprinkle with lemon zest.

Hummus and Cucumber Toast

ACTIVE TIME 5 MINUTES
TOTAL TIME 5 MINUTES
SERVES 2

- 2 Tbsp. hummus
- 2 slices whole-grain bread, toasted
- 1 Persian (mini) cucumber, sliced
- 1 tsp. olive oil
- 1/4 tsp. za'atar
 Flaky sea salt, for serving

spread 1 tablespoon hummus on each piece of toast. Top evenly with cucumber slices. Drizzle with oil. Sprinkle with za'atar and flaky sea salt.

Pomegranate-Almond Toast

ACTIVE TIME 5 MINUTES
TOTAL TIME 5 MINUTES
SERVES 2

- 2 Tbsp. almond butter
- 2 slices whole-grain bread, toasted
- 3 Tbsp. pomegranate arils
- 2 tsp. toasted, lightly salted pumpkin seeds (pepitas)
- 1 tsp. pure maple syrup (optional)

SPREAD 1 tablespoon almond butter on each piece of toast. Top evenly with pomegranate arils and pepitas. Drizzle with syrup, if desired.

Less is More

Meet four women who decided to live a downsized life. They share their motivations, strategies, and challenges—plus the rewards of their newfound simplicity.

By Laura Fenton





"I wanted my home to be a picture of calm"

Christine Platt

LITERACY ADVOCATE, AUTHOR OF THE FORTHCOMING
THE AFROMINIMALIST'S GUIDE TO LIVING WITH LESS, AND MOM OF ONE

HEN CHRISTINE LEFT HER job as a lawyer to pursue writing full-time in 2015, she started working from home. "For the first time, I was there not to just eat and sleep," she says. Being at home prompted an awakening: "I always knew I had too much stuff, but I had everything relatively organized," she says. She realized, though, that even if everything fit in her closets, it could still be an overwhelming amount to maintain. "I couldn't ignore it anymore."

GOAL: "When I started, I just wanted to be a minimalist," Christine says, laughing. "My goal was 'How can I make my home—and how can I feel—like what I'm looking at in pictures on blogs?" To her eyes, the minimalists' homes were superclean, and the people who lived in them appeared happier with less. She quickly discovered, however, that minimalism is a whole lot more than a spare aesthetic.

METHOD: Christine took a slow and steady approach to minimizing, paring back one category at a time. She began with home goods. "We had a lot of knick-knacks and stuff on the walls," she says. The first to go was a large photo in the dining room. "I said to myself, 'Let me see how the room feels without this,' and of course, it was fine."

BIGGEST CHALLENGE: The emotional experience of decluttering was hard. "When you pull everything out of your closet, when you see how much you own and how much you didn't use that still has tags on it, it's hard not to get emotional," she says. "You start to think of the money you spent. I try not to think of it as money wasted."



idea about being a "minimalist" has become a journey of living with intention, which she shares on Instagram (@afrominimalist). "There's no way you can be intentional with just your wardrobe or your home," she says. "Once you see and experience how good your home and closet feel, you want every area of your life to feel that way." She says this approach to life has given her space for things she wants to do most. "I've been able to grow my career as a children's book author and still support my antiracism work," she says. She even fits in a nap every afternoon.



"I wanted to be a better mom"

Allie Casazza

HOST OF THE PURPOSE SHOW PODCAST

AND MOM OF FOUR

EELING exhausted from taking care of children under the age of 3, Allie analyzed how she spent her days. She realized her time was gobbled up by tidying, cleaning, and asking her kids to get out of the way. "I started looking around and thinking, 'What is all this stuff? It's just creating extra work and sucking time away from me—for what?" she says.

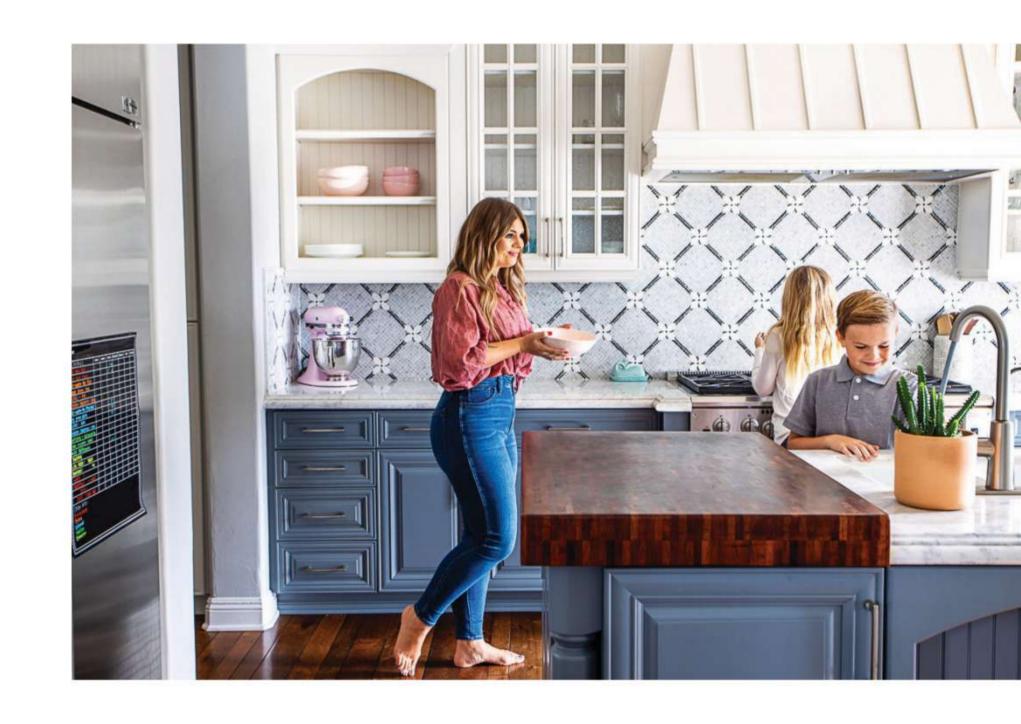
engaged as a mother. "My babies were growing up," she says. "I realized I was reacting to my life and maintaining my life rather than actually being present for it. That made me sad."

METHOD: Allie purged her children's playroom in an intense decluttering session one night. The next day, her daughter went to her play kitchen and started pretending. "Instead of going in the playroom, dumping every-

thing out, and asking for a snack two seconds later, she was playing independently." This was all the motivation Allie needed to tackle the rest of her house over just a few weeks. "I felt like I'd discovered a secret. I was onto something," she says. Working room by room, she went to her local donation center every couple of days. "They knew me by first name by the time I was done," she says, laughing. "I didn't want to put stuff in the garage. I didn't want piles temporarily sitting around. I wanted it out." She hadn't realized the stress her clutter was causing. "It would make me snap at my toddler and nag and complain-just not be who I wanted to be," she says. "It was so much more than the house."

closet. Allie loves to put outfits together, but she (perhaps overzealously) pruned her wardrobe to just jeans and basic tops. She came to understand that simplicity is relative to who you are. "If you want a full closet, you can have one," she says. She has slowly refilled her closet with clothes that bring her joy.

GREATEST REWARD: "My soul is lighter, everything is lighter. Even my marriage improved because I wasn't carrying so much stress," Allie says. "I chronicled the progress I was making at home in my blog, and that helped me find my passion," she says. "It was this massive realization of 'Oh my gosh, this is what I'm supposed to be doing."









"I was tired of being a messy person"

Denaye Barahona HOST OF THE SIMPLE FAMILIES PODCAST AND MOM OF TWO

ENAYE WAS messy growing up. "My mom was always chasing after me, saying, 'Clean up your room!" she recalls. Denaye internalized the refrain, believing being messy was part of her identity. But after becoming a mom, "I was drowning in stuff. I started to feel like this wasn't the legacy I wanted to pass on to my kids," she says. When a stylish mom in her baby group posted a picture of her near-empty closet on social media, it piqued Denaye's interest. The friend told her about the idea of capsule wardrobes, and she decided to try it.

GOAL: Denaye's aim was merely to be less messy. She wanted to get rid of the piles of laundry and paper. "I'd spent years dabbling in organizational systems—these highly systematic ways to keep

myself arranged-and it would last a week." It wasn't until she purged her closet that she figured out the answer: "I didn't need to organize. I needed to minimize."

METHOD: Denaye's closet was crammed with clothes she rarely wore. To help herself edit, she focused on a color scheme (a tip she read in Anuschka Rees's The Curated Closet). When she finished her closet, she recalls, "I wanted to take my coffee in there and hang out." She decided to bring those vibes to the rest of her house. "I wanted my home to be a place where I could feel comfortable and calm. It took a lot of decluttering to do that."

BIGGEST CHALLENGE: She didn't know how to maintain her newly decluttered home. "I knew I had to start buying differently," she says. She started shopping with intention—looking for specific items-instead of browsing to see what caught her eye. Then she created a family spending plan: "If you're careful about the way you spend money, you're going to be more careful about what comes into your home," she says.

GREATEST REWARD: Paring down helped Denaye find more calm, but she learned that "clutter is not limited to physical things," she says. She scaled back on obligations for both herself and her kids. "When you live more simply, you are calmer and more present—and your kids are better off too."

"We weren't using half our house"

Shavonda Gardner

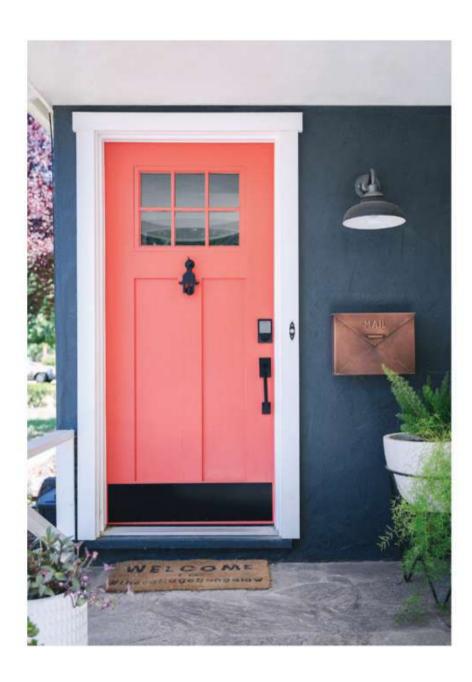
INTERIOR DESIGNER, BLOGGER, AND MOM OF TWO



AVING READ ABOUT the tiny-house movement, Shavonda and her wife realized they were paying a big mortgage on a 2,400-square-foot house they didn't use even half of. "We literally had an empty room we hadn't gotten around to furnishing yet," she says.

downsize their home and eliminate duplicate spaces, like formal and informal dining areas or a formal living room and a family room. With two school-age kids, they also wanted to live in a walkable neighborhood with a more tight-knit community.

METHOD: When their house sold more quickly than expected, the family temporarily rented a tiny two-bedroom apartment, which helped clarify what they needed for their permanent home. When they moved into their 1,200-square-foot bungalow a few months later, Shavonda knew what she had to keep and what she could easily live without. As she decorates the new house, a process she documents on Instagram (@sgardnerstyle), she's taken a paced approach to filling it. She likes to say that decorating is a marathon, not a sprint. "Absolutely nothing comes in that I don't love. It doesn't necessarily have to have a pur-



pose. It could just give me joy or be pretty," she says of her decidedly not minimalist decor style. "But when it comes to downsizing and living in a small home," she says, "less is absolutely more."

her children understand and adjust to the change. "I wanted them to know we could have a great life, just different than what we were used to," she says. Her tween daughter especially resisted the move to a smaller home. "We had to make sure she understood that her moms were not in any type of financial trouble, and that this was not a negative thing," Shavonda says.

HER GREATEST REWARD:

"There's a saying that small homes breed close families, and it's so incredibly true," Shavonda says. "Our kids are very thoughtful about the world around them. We have to be considerate of everyone. We just don't have the space not to be."

More Genius Ways to Lighten Up

Donate That Special Dress

Cary Fortin, coauthor of *New Minimalism*, donated her wedding dress not because she had gotten divorced or had a bad wedding day, but because she wanted to share the joy now, instead of saving it for a daughter who'd have to be her height and weight to wear it. "It's a dress I felt beautiful in that I wore on the happiest day of my life," she says. "If I can share that experience with another person—or even three or eight—what could be better?"

Rethink Entire Rooms

While staying at home last spring, Ashlee Piper realized she needed a place to unwind more than a dedicated home office. So the author of *Give a Sh*t:* Do Good. Live Better. Save the Planet donated or sold most of the furniture in her office to make space for yoga and exercise. "It's pretty bare now, but it feels so nice because at the end of the day I can go into a totally fresh space to decompress from work," she says.

Streamline Kids' Clothes

Jessie Lipscomb, an illustrator and mom of three in Charleston, South Carolina, only buys clothing that can coordinate with everything else in her children's closets, and she sticks with gender-neutral basics. "I can grab and go, and not have to think, 'Is this cute? Does this match?" she says. Another benefit: no massive pile of laundry. "Having fewer clothes makes laundry less daunting," she says.

Give Differently

After becoming acutely aware of issues of waste and sustainability, Nina Hitchen, an interior designer in Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts, changed her approach to family gifts. For Christmas, she gives her twins just three things each (and tries to source secondhand items). She also asks family and friends to limit gift giving to one present. "Otherwise my mom would bring a truckload of gifts for them every time she visits," she jokes.

THINGS
YOU CAN
LET GO
OF RIGHT
NOW

Mystery cords & chargers

Uncomfortable shoes

Expired sunblock

Hotel toiletries

Freebie T-shirts

Sad underwear

Random coffee mugs

Ancient textbooks

Ratty linens

Plastic containers with no lid

Lids with no container

Gross sneakers

CDs, DVDs & VHS tapes

Every single broken crayon



SELLYOUR STUFF AND MAKE BANK

Is that random gold bracelet, vintage trench, or stack of baseball cards no longer sparking joy? Find the best place to sell (or donate!) your stuff—sense of accomplishment included.

BY JULIE VADNAL
PHOTOGRAPHS BY MITCHELL FEINBERG

IT'S FUN TO IMAGINE that our cluttered closets and jam-packed garages are filled with items people would pay good money for. Turns out, that fantasy is not so far-fetched. When my sister and I left our shared apartment for separate, smaller places last summer, we hopped on the internet, selling sofas, desks, appliances, clothing, art, and books to friends and strangers. In the end, I earned nearly \$3,500.

Selling belongings online or IRL isn't just a great way to declutter and avoid landfill waste—it's also big business. Partly spurred by the trend of bypassing fast fashion (and retail prices), the resale market is valued at a whopping \$28 billion, and that figure is expected to more than double by 2024, according to a report from ThredUp, an online resale store. The RealReal, a luxury consignment site, has seen a 36 percent increase in first-time buyers during Covid-19. All of this is to say: There's never been a better time to sell your stuff.

BEFORE YOU START, **ASK YOURSELF 3 QUESTIONS**

WHY DO YOU WANT TO SELL IT?

Decide what your priority is: getting some cash, or just getting rid of the item. Sure, there's money to be made by selling your prom dress or kids' old sporting equipment online, but keep in mind that posting an item doesn't immediately remove it from your space—someone has to buy it first and it's not always an instant moneymaker. Donating might be the most efficient (and altruistic) route.

IS SELLING WORTH YOUR TIME?

"Sometimes it's just not," says Shauna Yule Brasseur, a professional organizer at Lovely Life Home in Hingham, Massachusetts. (Last year she tried to sell her daughter's silver Hunter boots, but weeks went by with zero interest.) "In that case you should gift it, which accomplishes what you really want, which is to let the thing go."

SHOULD YOU STORE IT INSTEAD?

Putting something in storage could just create problems for your future self, Brasseur says. Evaluate how meaningful the item is to you. "Ask yourself, 'Do I love it?' and 'Is it truly useful?'" she suggests. "If it doesn't fit in one of those two baskets, then you should let it go." If you're still unsure, put the item on the top shelf of your closet. If you don't reach for it in six months, you have your answer.



OK, I WANT TO **DONATE IT...**

To Charity

Many Goodwill stores are open during the pandemic and accept contactless donations of all kinds. Some stores quarantine items before they hit the sales floor. Certain Salvation Army locations may even arrange for pickup so you don't have to schlep furniture or other heavy items. If there's a shelter near you, call and ask if they want your stuff. (Due to Covid restrictions, some donation centers may be closed, so check before you load up the car.) Keep a list of what you donated so you can write off items come tax season.

To Be Recycled

An estimated 85 percent of textile waste ends up in landfills, according to the Council for Textile Recycling. The good news: Many major retailers have programs that turn old clothes into new ones. H&M accepts any brand for recycling, and Madewell's denim recycling program offers \$20 off a new pair of jeans. The activewear brand Girlfriend Collective takes back its used leggings, shorts, and sports bras in exchange for a gift card.

DECIDE WHAT YOUR PRIORITY IS: GETTING SOME CASH, OR JUST GETTING RID OF THE ITEM.

The retailer For Days sells a Take Back Bag for \$10—fill the bag with clean, used clothes and return it with the prepaid shipping label. The company recycles everything in it. You can also check if your town has textile recycling programs or clothing drives.

To a Buy Nothing Group

It's like leaving something at the end of your driveway, but online. In these hyperlocal, one-person's-trash-is-another-person's-treasure Facebook groups, members post items they no longer need (from baby supplies to kitchen tools to fabric scraps) in hopes that a neighbor will want them. Visit buynothingproject.org to find your local group.

To a Deserving Cause

Treat your inner circle to the things you're trying to offload—and collect money for a worthy cause in the process. When my sister and I were redecorating our apartment, we posted pictures of our unwanted items on our Instagram Stories with quick descriptions—"Cute clogs, size 11, barely worn!"—and offered to ship stuff to people who weren't local. Then we donated the cash we raised (\$150!) to Emily's List.

YES, I REALLY WANNA SELL IT...

On Poshmark

BEST FOR: Mass-market clothing and accessories, from brands like Madewell, Target, and Coach.

HOW IT WORKS: Take pictures of your items through the app, set your prices, and post to your "closet." Once a buyer bites, you have seven days to print out the prepaid shipping label, pack up the items, and drop them off at the post office.

your cut: You get 80 percent of sales over \$15; anything under that, and Poshmark takes \$2.95. A Coach bag I recently sold for \$150 earned me \$120. USE IT: If you're tired of being turned down at your local consignment store and don't mind managing sales from your phone or computer. You also need a printer and packing supplies.

On eBay

BEST FOR: Memorabilia, from comic books to stamps to records.

HOW IT WORKS: Post up to 12 photos of your item and name your price. (The site reportedly has more than 1 billion active listings, so you'll have to be competitive.) Browsers can purchase your item immediately or offer the amount they'd like to pay.

YOUR CUT: Depending on the item, eBay takes about 2 to 12 percent of sales.

USE IT: To clear out your old baseball cards and figurine collections.

On Amazon or Phobio

BEST FOR: Used cellphones, laptops, and other electronics.

HOW IT WORKS: With Amazon, you send in your electronic item (home security device, Bluetooth speaker) and the company determines its

BUT I THINK THIS MIGHT BE WORTH SOMETHING!

"People often overvalue their heirloom pieces," says Lark Mason, president of the Appraisers Association of America and a regular on Antiques Roadshow. "What they think is special turns out to be special emotionally for them, but not for other people." He estimates that only about 5 percent of the items people run by him are actually valuable. If you still believe you've got a true gem, here's his advice.

TALK TO YOUR FAMILY FIRST Before you reach out to an expert to evaluate your grandmother's

to evaluate your grandmother's antiques, sit down with your parents and siblings to make sure you're on the same page about selling.

DO SOME ONLINE RESEARCH

Scan the Sotheby's and Christie's databases to see if similar items appear. If your chest of drawers has a lookalike at an auction house, it might be worth getting appraised. You can also search eBay, to find out what similar items sell for there.

EMAIL AN APPRAISER

Mason says that many appraisers are happy to share informal thoughts over email. Send a photo and as much detail as possible.

DECIDE WHERE TO SELL IT

If the piece is of value, your appraiser can help guide you to the right spot, whether that's an auction house or online consignment store.

BE AN A+ ONLINE SELLER

Nashville-based Regina Barbour is a full-time Poshmark seller (her Instagram handle is @basicposhbabe) who also cohosts a podcast about reselling called The Dime Store Cowgirls. She shares her secrets.

INTERACT WITH CUSTOMERS

Barbour treats her Poshmark closet like a retail store—she's constantly updating her supply and messaging shoppers who "like" items she has for sale. "Introduce yourself and ask if there's anything they're looking for," she says.

TAKE GOOD PHOTOS Barbour models her wares so prospective buyers can see exactly how a dress or pair of jeans fits. She also likes "flat lays," in which she neatly folds a garment and shoots it from above. Snap close-up pics of details—as well as any flaws.

PREPARE FOR HAGGLING

As the seller, you set the initial price. "I usually consider how much I'd be willing to pay for an item if I were shopping," Barbour says. "Then I go a little higher than that to account for negotiation."

BE YOUR OWN POST OFFICE

Dedicate a bin to shipping supplies-padded envelopes, boxes, tape, tissue paper—to help get your wares out the door ASAP.

SAY THANKS Barbour prints a prewritten thank-you card to include in each package. A handwritten note goes a long way too. worth. With Phobio, a trade-in company that accepts smartphones and computers, you fill out an online form with info about the device and its condition. Phobio then gives you a quote for its trade-in value and sends you a shipping kit. If the item is too old to earn you money, Phobio will recycle it upon request.

YOUR CUT: Amazon offers site credit, and Phobio emails an Apple gift card. The amount varies. A Google Pixel 3 recently scored me a \$90 Apple gift card through Phobio.

USE IT: To clear out your graveyard of unused electronics.

On Facebook Marketplace or Craigslist

BEST FOR: Literally anything furniture, electronics, used wedding decor.

HOW IT WORKS: Take pictures and upload your listing. From there, potential buyers can message you to haggle or ask about pickup or shipping.

YOUR CUT: 100 percent of the price, in whatever form you want to be paid. Most people opt for cash, Venmo, or PayPal.

USE IT: If you have the patience to scroll through dozens of "Is this still



available?" messages. Everyone, even serious buyers, will ask that question. Kat Steck of Los Angeles (@thejunk yardjournals on Instagram), who sold \$3,000 worth of stuff on Facebook Marketplace last summer, replies with this: "Yes, it's available, but I have a lot of inquiries. When would you like to pick it up?" That wording creates a sense of urgency and helps you determine who's actually interested in buying—and who's just browsing.

On The RealReal

BEST FOR: Designer handbags and clothing. Louis Vuitton, Gucci, and Chanel top the list of best-selling brands on the site.

HOW IT WORKS: Make a virtual consignment appointment with a luxury manager, who will let you know which items they'll take. The company sends you a prepaid shipping label or has a messenger pick up your goods. All items are inspected for wear and tear; any that don't pass muster are mailed back to you free of charge.

YOUR CUT: You get 40 percent of items priced \$145 and below, 50 percent of items priced from \$146 to \$195, and 55 percent of items priced from \$196 to \$1,500. Once you sell more than \$1,500 worth of stuff on the site, you enter higher tiers and earn more. And commission works differently for some high-value items, like certain types of jewelry and handbags. A pair of Warby Parker sunglasses I consigned was listed at \$64—I made \$25.60 from the sale.

USE IT: If you need to clean out your closet fast and prefer a hands-off approach. Most items sell within 30 days of being listed.

On Kaiyo or AptDeco

BEST FOR: Vintage and mass-market furniture (West Elm and Restoration Hardware sell especially well on Kaiyo) in the New York City and Philadelphia areas. AptDeco plans to expand nationally within the next two years. **HOW IT WORKS:** With AptDeco, take pictures of the piece you want to sell and create your post; Kaiyo does the posting for you. Staffers from Kaiyo or AptDeco come over and take the furniture off your hands—at no cost to you. **YOUR CUT:** On Kaiyo, you get 60 percent of listings over \$3,000, but just 10 percent of listings \$99 or less. That's only if the item sells—a chair I gave to Kaiyo last June has yet to find a new home, so I haven't seen a cent. On the plus side, it's out of my apartment, and if it never sells (which the company says is very rare), it will be donated. AptDeco charges a fee of 25 to 38 percent of the sale price. **USE IT:** When you're moving and don't have the time or energy to go back and forth with buyers on Facebook Marketplace or Craigslist.

On Instagram

BEST FOR: Curated items, from fashion to housewares.

HOW IT WORKS: Make an account that's just for selling items, usually within a category (think: vintage furniture or clothing). Whoever messages or comments first gets dibs.

YOUR CUT: All of it, via whatever payment method you prefer, minus shipping if necessary.

USE IT: If you've got a dedicated social media following and love the thrill of a quick sale. Just remember you have to arrange for pickup or shipping. Girl, don't be that flake!

HOW TO SELL SAFELY

We've all heard the horror stories. Make sure you're selling your goods in the securest way possible.

MEET IN A PUBLIC PLACE

If you'd rather not give your address to a total stranger on the internet, agree to hand off your item elsewhere, suggests Deb Liu, vice president and founder of Facebook Marketplace. Try a grocery store parking lot. Bring a friend or share your location on your phone with a loved one.

CONFIRM THE PAYMENT GOES
THROUGH Establish from the
get-go how you'd like to be paid,
either in cash or via a payment
app. Don't let your buyer leave with
the item before the money clears.

EXPECTATIONS Set boundaries that make you feel comfortable. For example, tell your buyer in advance that you'll be wearing a mask for your meetup. If you're selling an item that might require a test-drive—like a bicycle—alert your potential buyer that you'll want to hold their phone or wallet as collateral so they don't disappear with your merch.

TRUE TASTE. NO COMPROMISES.



Inspired by homemade, brought to life with some of Italy's finest ingredients. Nothing artificial, No sugar added.

O VEROGUSTOSAUCE.COM











Easy Dinner 2

Crispy Tofu Noodle Soup

ACTIVE TIME 30 MINUTES TOTAL TIME 30 MINUTES SERVES 4

✓ Quick Cooking ✓ Vegan ✓ Gluten-Free ✓ Family Friendly

1-in. pieces

- 1/4 cup tamari or low-sodium soy sauce, divided
- 6 scallions
- 3 Tbsp. toasted sesame oil, divided
- 6 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 2-in. piece fresh ginger, finely chopped (2 Tbsp.)
- 8 cups low-sodium vegetable broth
- 4 whole star anise
- 6 oz. rice vermicelli noodles
- 4 cups stemmed, chopped Swiss chard (from 1 bunch) Chili crisp, sriracha, or sambal oelek, for serving

Toss tofu with 2 tablespoons tamari in a shallow bowl. Cut dark green parts from scallions; reserve. Thinly slice light green and white parts of scallions.

HEAT 2 tablespoons oil in a large pot over medium-high. Add light green and white parts of scallions, garlic, and ginger; cook, stirring constantly, until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add broth, star anise, and remaining 2 tablespoons tamari; bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium. Cover and simmer for 10 minutes.

FOOD

MEANWHILE, heat remaining 1 tablespoon oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high. Drain tofu, discarding any remaining liquid. Add tofu to skillet; cook, turning occasionally, until browned and crisp, about 3 minutes. Transfer to a plate lined with paper towels.

DISCARD star anise from soup. Increase heat to medium-high. Add rice noodles and chard; cook, stirring occasionally, until noodles are tender, about 4 minutes. Meanwhile, thinly slice reserved dark green parts of scallions. Serve soup topped with crispy tofu and dark green scallion parts. Serve with chili sauce.

PER SERVING: 362 Calories, 14g Fat (1.5g Saturated), Omg Cholesterol, 5g Fiber, 9g Protein, 47g Carbs, 1,060mg Sodium, 3g Sugar



Easy Dinner 3

Instant Pot Lamb Tacos with Feta

ACTIVE TIME 25 MINUTES TOTAL TIME 1 HOUR, 25 MINUTES SERVES 4

> ✓ Make Ahead
> ✓ Instant Pot ✓ Family Friendly

into 2-in. pieces

11/2 tsp. kosher salt

- 3/4 tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- 3 Tbsp. canola oil, divided
- 5 cloves garlic, peeled and smashed

1½ cups beef stock

8 6-in. flour tortillas, warmed Crumbled feta cheese. pomegranate arils, plain whole-milk Greek yogurt, and chopped fresh mint, for serving

SEASON lamb with salt and pepper. Select sauté setting on a pressure multicooker (such as Instant Pot). Select high temperature setting, add 2 tablespoons oil, and preheat for 1 to 2 minutes. Add lamb and cook, turning once, until starting to brown, 3 to 4 minutes per side. Press cancel.

WHEN cooking has finished, carefully turn steam-release handle to venting position and quickrelease pressure. Using a slotted spoon, transfer lamb to a rimmed baking sheet lined with aluminum foil, reserving 1/2 cup cooking liquid. Shred lamb into bite-size pieces.

PREHEAT broiler with oven rack 6 inches from heat. Toss lamb with 1/4 cup reserved cooking liquid and remaining 1 tablespoon oil on baking sheet. Broil until starting to crisp, about 5 minutes. Remove from oven; drizzle with remaining 1/4 cup cooking liquid. Serve lamb in tortillas topped with feta, pomegranate arils, yogurt, and mint.

PER SERVING: 697 Calories, 47g Fat (18g Saturated), 112mg Cholesterol, 4g Fiber, 35g Protein, 32g Carbs, 1,214mg Sodium, Og Sugar



- 6 medium red potatoes (1½ lb. total), thinly sliced
- 1/4 cup olive oil, divided
- 13/4 tsp. kosher salt, divided
 - 3 Tbsp. harissa (chili paste)
 - 2 tsp. light brown sugar
 - 2 Tbsp. fresh lemon juice (from 1 lemon), divided
 - 4 6-oz. skinless salmon fillets
 - 3 Tbsp. mayonnaise
 - 1 clove garlic, grated on a Microplane (1/2 tsp.)
 - 4 cups baby arugula

dish in oven and preheat oven to 450°F. Toss potatoes with 3 tablespoons oil and 1 teaspoon salt in a large bowl. Carefully add potatoes to hot baking dish in an even layer, overlapping if needed. Bake until potatoes are just tender, about 15 minutes.

MEANWHILE, combine harissa, sugar, 1 tablespoon lemon juice, and ½ teaspoon salt in a bowl. When potatoes are tender, remove baking dish from oven and place salmon fillets 1 inch apart on top of potatoes. Spread harissa mixture over salmon. Bake until salmon flakes with a fork and is just cooked through, about 8 minutes.

meanwhile, combine mayonnaise, garlic, and 2 teaspoons lemon juice in a small bowl. Toss arugula with remaining 1 tablespoon oil, 1 teaspoon lemon juice, and 1/4 teaspoon salt in a large bowl; serve with salmon and potatoes. Drizzle mayonnaise mixture over salmon.

PER SERVING: 673 Calories, 33g Fat (5g Saturated), 97mg Cholesterol, 6g Fiber, 40g Protein, 55g Carbs, 1,039mg Sodium, 6g Sugar (1g Added)



Easy Dinner 4

Harissa Salmon and Potatoes

ACTIVE TIME 30 MINUTES TOTAL TIME 30 MINUTES SERVES 4

✓ Quick Cooking ✓ One Pan ✓ Gluten-Free

FOOD

Easy Dinner 5

Black-Eyed Pea Ribollita

ACTIVE TIME 30 MINUTES TOTAL TIME 30 MINUTES SERVES 4

✓ Quick Cooking ✓ Make Ahead ✓ One Pot ✓ Vegetarian

- 1 5-oz. block Parmigiano-Reggiano with rind
- ¹/₄ cup olive oil, divided
- 1 yellow onion, chopped
- 11/4 tsp. kosher salt, divided
 - 4 cups stemmed, chopped collard greens (from 1 bunch)
 - 1 28-oz. can crushed tomatoes
 - 4 cups low-sodium vegetable broth
 - 1 15-oz. can black-eyed peas, drained and rinsed
- 1/2 12-oz. loaf ciabatta, torn into 2-in. pieces, divided
- 2 tsp. red wine vinegar

REMOVE rind from cheese; reserve. Heat 2 tablespoons oil in a large oven-safe pot over medium-high. Add onion and 1/4 teaspoon salt; cook until onion softens, about 3 minutes. Add greens; cook until wilted, about 3 minutes. Add crushed tomatoes, broth, and rind; bring to a boil over high. Add blackeyed peas, half of bread pieces, and remaining 1 teaspoon salt. Reduce heat to medium-low. Cook, stirring occasionally, until slightly thickened, about 10 minutes. Meanwhile, grate cheese using large holes of a box grater to equal 1/2 cup.

PREHEAT broiler with oven rack 6 inches from heat. Discard rind. Stir in vinegar. Scatter remaining bread pieces over soup; sprinkle with grated cheese. Transfer to oven and broil until edges of bread start to crisp and cheese melts, 3 to 4 minutes. Drizzle with remaining 2 tablespoons oil.

PER SERVING: 473 Calories, 19g Fat (4g Saturated), 9mg Cholesterol, 11g Fiber, 17g Protein, 60g Carbs, 1,249mg Sodium, 7.5g Sugar





Plant Powered

Tofu and Mushroom Larb

A SPICY MEAT SALAD POPULAR IN SOUTHEAST ASIA,

LARB GETS THE VEGGIE TREATMENT IN THIS ZESTY FLAVOR BOMB.

By Ananda Eidelstein

ACTIVE TIME 30 MINUTES
TOTAL TIME 30 MINUTES
SERVES 4

- 1 14-oz. pkg. extra-firm tofu, drained
- 1/4 cup melted unrefined coconut oil, divided
- 8 oz. sliced shiitake mushrooms (about 4 cups), divided
- 1/4 tsp. kosher salt
- 3½ Tbsp. fresh lime juice (from 2 limes), plus wedges for serving
 - 2 Tbsp. fish sauce or tamari
- 2½ tsp. packed light brown sugar
- 1/2 tsp. crushed red pepper
- 1 shallot, very thinly sliced
- 3 scallions, white and light green parts finely chopped (1/4 cup)
- 1/2 cup chopped fresh cilantro leaves (from 1 bunch), divided
- ¹/₂ cup chopped roasted, salted cashews
- 1/2 cup lightly packed fresh mint leaves, torn if large
- 1 small head red cabbage, quartered and leaves separated Cooked sushi rice, for serving

PRESS tofu between paper towels to absorb liquid. Crumble into a bowl, leaving some large pieces.

HEAT 1 tablespoon oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high. Add half of mushrooms and cook, undisturbed, until golden, about 3 minutes. Toss; cook until browned, about 2 minutes. Transfer to a plate. Repeat with 1 tablespoon oil and remaining mushrooms. Season with salt.



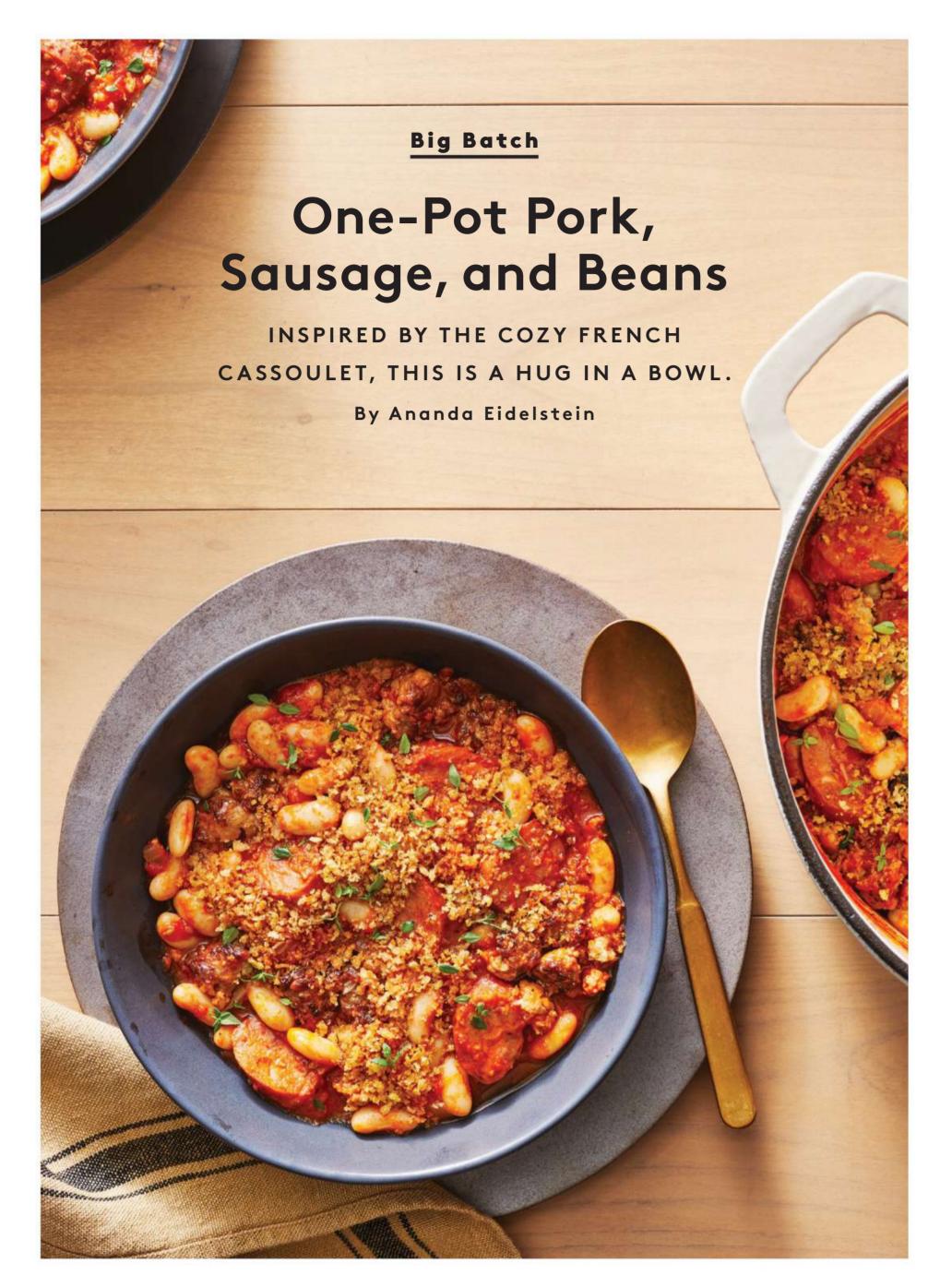
HEAT remaining 2 tablespoons oil over medium-high. Add tofu; cook, undisturbed, until golden brown on underside, about 5 minutes. Toss; cook until golden and crispy, 4 to 5 minutes. Remove from heat. Stir in mushrooms, lime juice, fish sauce, sugar, and crushed red pepper. Add shallot, scallions, and half of cilantro; toss. Top with cashews, mint, and remaining cilantro. Scoop onto cabbage leaves; serve with rice and lime wedges.



TOFU

This go-to plant protein, made from soybeans, is a nutritional powerhouse, since it boasts all nine essential amino acids. It also has a range of vitamins and minerals, including bone-building calcium and energy-boosting iron.

Try more of our flavorful vegetarian dishes at realsimple.com/plantpowered.



SERVING AND STORING

Dust this satisfying stew with crispy, salty panko just before serving. Seasoned panko can be stored at room temperature in an airtight container for up to 2 days. Freeze untopped stew in containers or zip-top bags for up to 2 months.

ACTIVE TIME 40 MINUTES
TOTAL TIME 40 MINUTES
SERVES 8

- 1/4 cup olive oil, divided
- 1 12-oz. pkg. andouille chicken sausage, pricked with a fork
- 1 cup panko
- 11/4 tsp. kosher salt, divided
 - 1 yellow onion, chopped
 - 1 carrot, grated
 - 4 cloves garlic, crushed
 - 1 lb. ground pork
- $^{1}\!/_{2}$ tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- 2 Tbsp. tomato paste
- 1 14.5-oz. can crushed tomatoes
- 2 sprigs thyme, plus leaves for serving
- 2 15.5-oz. cans cannellini beans, drained and rinsed

heavy-bottomed pot or Dutch oven over medium. Add sausage; cook, turning often, until browned on all sides, about 8 minutes. Transfer to a plate. Add panko and ½ teaspoon salt to pot; cook, stirring constantly, until golden, about 2 minutes. Transfer to a bowl.

WIPE pot clean. Heat remaining 2 tablespoons oil over medium. Add onion, carrot, and garlic; cook, stirring often, until softened, about 5 minutes. Increase heat to medium-high. Add ground pork, pepper, and remaining 1 teaspoon salt; cook, breaking up pork with a wooden spoon and stirring occasionally, until browned, 6 to 8 minutes. Add tomato paste; cook until darkened and coating pork, about 2 minutes. Stir in 13/4 cups water, crushed tomatoes, and thyme, scraping up browned bits; bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low. Simmer, stirring often, until sauce thickens slightly, about 10 minutes. Meanwhile, diagonally slice sausage.

ADD beans and sliced sausage to pot. Cook over medium, stirring occasionally, until warmed through, about 2 minutes. Discard thyme sprigs. Sprinkle with panko and thyme leaves before serving.

Surprising Facts About Staying Hydrated

IT'S A TALL ORDER TO GET YOUR DAILY 111/2 GLASSES.

THAT'S WHY YOU NEED TO THINK BEYOND THE TAP.

By Rachel Sylvester

THIRST IS A LATE INDICATOR OF DEHYDRATION

If you're parched, it's possible your body has already lost 1 to 2 percent of its water content—hindering physical and mental function. So rather than waiting for thirst to set in, watch for early clues of dehydration, including headache, fatigue, decreased exercise performance, dizziness, and hunger.

BLAME THE MIDDAY BLUES ON MILD DEHYDRATION

Not drinking enough water can result in irritability and even anxiety. Studies show that a lack of liquid can impair cognitive performance, which could interfere with memory, mental energy, and focus.

WATER IS NOT THE MOST HYDRATING BEVERAGE

Turns out, milk really does do the body good. Full-fat milk, skim milk, and even orange juice hydrate better than water, since they contain electrolytes that help maintain fluid balances in the body, a study in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition found. The study also noted that in terms of hydration potential, water is no different from beer or soda.

PRODUCE HYDRATES BETTER THAN WATER

Water-rich fruits and vegetables (grapefruit, cucumbers, lettuce, celery) can hydrate effectively, thanks to their electrolytes. Four to five servings a day can give you about 18 percent of your daily fluid needs; hit nine servings and you could get 40 percent.

OUR EXPERTS

KRISTEN WILLEUMIER, PHD,
AUTHOR OF BIOHACK
YOUR BRAIN

KATHERINE ZERATSKY, RDN, MAYO CLINIC IN ROCHESTER, MINNESOTA



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WITH KEY NUTRIENTS* FOR IMMUNE SUPPORT

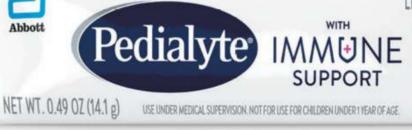






SCAN TO LEARN MORE



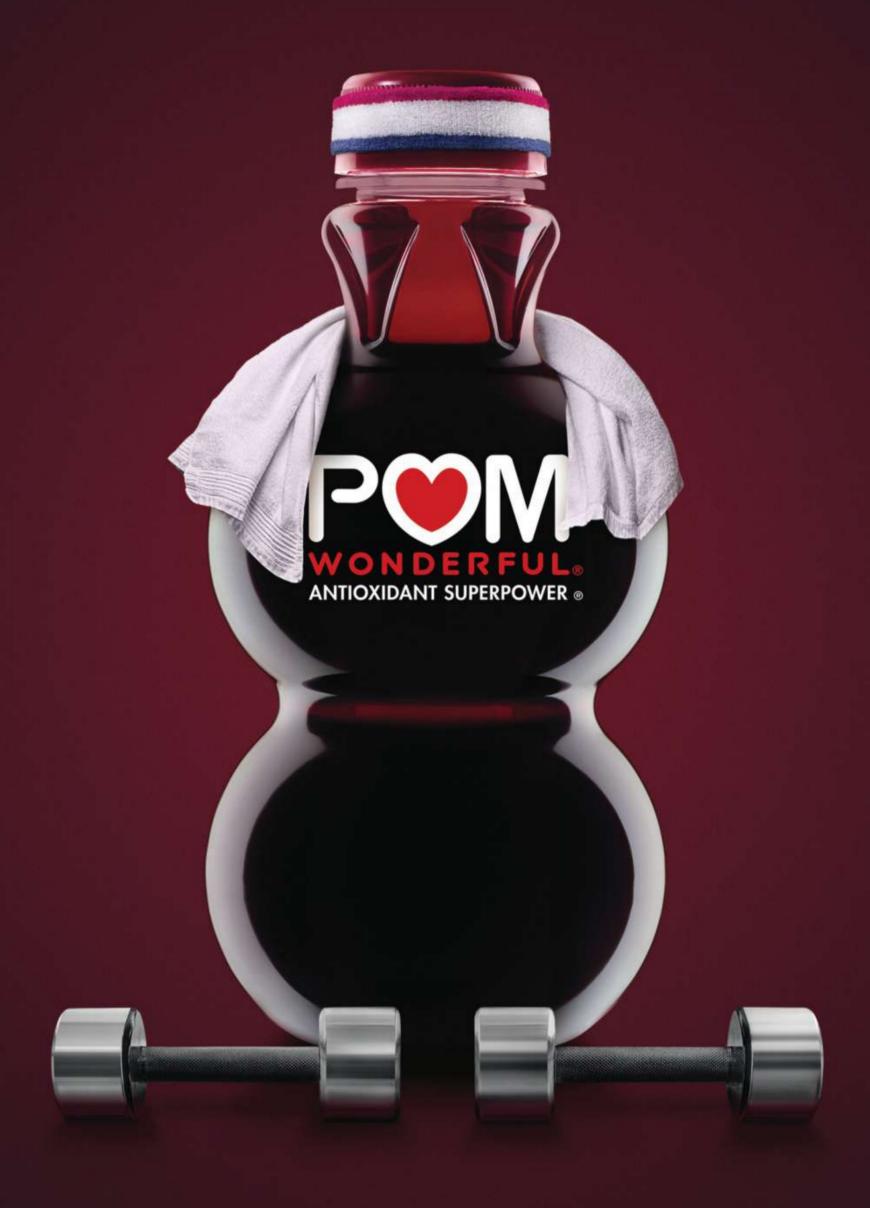






^{*} Zinc and prebiotics for immune support. ©2020 Abbott 20206139/November 2020 LITHO IN USA

Flex your antioxidant muscles.



The Antioxidant Superpower, POM Wonderful, has 700 mg of polyphenol antioxidants in every 8oz bottle. Making it the perfect workout partner the next time you hit the gym.